

APPARENT NARRATIVE AS THEMATIC METAPHOR

Studies
in the
Organisation
of

THE FAERIE QUEENE

by

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ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν

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I wish to dedicate these pages to my Renaissance tutees
(Edinburgh, Autumn Term 1980)
that they may live with the eternity of my fame

Cathrin Burton
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PREFACE

Luctor et Emergo

'In the destructive element immerse': such is the wisdom of Stein, in Conrad's Lord Jim. And with this advice my supervisor started me, some five years ago, when I was much given to 'pure' speculation about the nature of literary texts, on my Spenser research. It has proved counsel of perfection; more significantly so than perhaps even he could have anticipated. Yet, from my present, hard-won vantage point, I must contradict him, within agreement. 'In the destructive element immerse. That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream - and so - ewig - usque ad finem. ...' True. But The Faerie Queene also calls for this apostolic injunction: 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Ephesians 5.14). Like Bunyan, Spenser would emancipate us from the City of Destruction.

Two institutions deserve my gratitude for financial assistance. The University of Edinburgh granted me a studentship covering the period from October 1976 till December 1977, which enabled me to develop a project. ZWO, The Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research, employed me from January 1978 till December 1979, thus enabling me to carry it out up to revision stage. To both I should like to quote these words of that great scholar, Rosemond Tuve: 'You don't give money to people in whom you have faith. You give it to the thing they have faith in because you have faith in it too'.

Edinburgh, 5 May 1981

ABBREVIATIONS

Variorum	<u>The Faerie Queene, Vols I-VI of The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition</u> , edited by Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford, Ray Heffner (Baltimore, 1932-38)
OED	<u>The Oxford English Dictionary</u> , 12 Vols and Supplement/Bibliography (Oxford, 1933; rpt. 1961)
CamJ	Cambridge Journal
ELH	Journal of English Literary History
ELN	English Language Notes
HLQ	Huntington Library Quarterly
JWCI	Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MLR	Modern Language Review
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
SP	Studies in Philology
TLS	The Times Literary Supplement
UTQ	University of Toronto Quarterly

STATEMENT
(Regulation 2.4.15)

I hereby declare that this thesis has been
composed by myself and embodies my own work.

ABSTRACT

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.

For 'the world' read 'moral man', and Hopkins's lines would be the perfect epigraph to The Faerie Queene, defining both its theme and its mode. Or so this thesis contends. It re-examines Spenser's Letter to Raleigh, so often ignored or even maligned, to find that it makes sense, both internally and with reference to the poem, on two conditions. One is that we grasp the poet's conceptual argument, according to which morality manifests redemption in Christ and thus constitutes the earthly anticipation of heavenly glory. The other is that, for once, we take him literally when he calls his work a continued allegory. Both points are developed in detail, but the latter receives all the emphasis, partly because it concerns a more strictly literary issue and partly because it is highly controversial. To be sure, existing criticism takes for granted the poem's status as allegory. Yet it persists in treating its fiction as narrative. Spenser makes such treatment logically impossible. He invites it only to expose the stories' illusoriness, thus directing the reader to take them as symbols, not exempla. Literally the whole poem falls to pieces, which are united exclusively in virtue of their allegorical meaning. This unity is given. Yet interpretation has to struggle endlessly to work it out: it reveals itself only intermittently, in flashes. Salvation, too, is given. Yet morality has to battle continuously to work it out, being only an elusive intimation of immortality. The poem's mode enacts its theme.

Chapter One gets The Faerie Queene as a whole into proper perspective. Chapters Two and Three each discuss a 'narrative strand' in the Middle Books; a strategic choice, in that these Books challenge the relevance of the Letter's programme more obviously than any of the Outer Books.

I What is Wrong with The Faerie Queene?

Spenser's magnum opus tends to elude readers, or even to lose them altogether. In the experience of most lovers of English literature their national epic is peripheral. It fails to register. Nor is this simply as a result of its unfinished state: for a fragment the work is strikingly complete in itself. One must blame, rather, its apparent indeterminacy, both semantic and structural. On the whole one feels as though condemned to an interpreters' Hades, groping vainly for meanings or clasping nebulous tautologies. Self-authenticating understanding is persistently frustrated. One also faces the poem's 'labyrinthine unsearchability', to use Fowler's phrase. Sale, less glamorously, calls it 'theoretically endless', noting how 'it never "gets anywhere"'.¹ Spenser's use of what seems to be interwoven narrative flouts the reasoned prejudices of doctrinaire neo-classicists and the implicit assumptions of those reared on naturalistic novels. Yet the unsettling effect of his story is too profound to be traced to an ill-appreciated technique. Entrelacement dislocates readers only to raise and, eventually, fulfil expectations of home-coming, as in Ariosto.² Now it is not as though Spenser, in self-defeating rivalry with Ariosto's complexity, leaves suspended too many strands to be remembered. Nor does he lose control of them himself. (His inconsistencies, when not mere slips of the pen, prompt specific explanations, such as Bennett's evolutionary theory.³) It is, rather, that the internal coherence of his strands seems insubstantial. Not only does he

¹ Edmund Spenser, Writers and their Work, 258 (Harlow, 1977), p.26; Reading Spenser: An Introduction to 'The Faerie Queene' (New York, 1968), p.10, 29.

² Not that this is the 'whole point' of the technique. On entrelacement in general see Eugène Vinaver, The Rise of Romance (Oxford, 1971), especially Chapter V. For an admiring account of Ariosto's skilful handling of it see Orlando Furioso (The Frenzy of Orlando): A Romantic Epic by Ludovico Ariosto, translated by Barbara Reynolds, 2 vols (Harmondsworth, 1975-77), II, 7-18.

³ The Evolution of 'The Faerie Queene' (Chicago, 1942).

not imitate the zest and bravura with which Ariosto abandons, picks up and gathers in the threads: when one joins constituent scenes for him, more often than not the hinges turn out to be a mere 'and then' without any content. Take the story of Belphoebe. Neither the first Belphoebe episode (II.iii), nor the second (III.v), is manifestly 'to be continued'. Nor does the vantage point of the third (IV.vii-viii) reveal, even in retrospect, a unified story with an intelligible development. Clearly this kind of inconsequentiality does not result from dispositio, which, on the contrary, conceals it to some extent. As a matter of fact, it obtains also between consecutive episodes belonging to a single strand. For instance, Red Cross's meeting with Archimago does not truly follow on from his defeat of Error, which reads like a self-contained mini-story in spite of being 'continued' immediately (I.i).

As an attempt to specify the stumbling-block in The Faerie Queene this will probably command the assent of those who have given it up. However, as an indictment it begs the question. If the poem's indeterminacy is as pervasive as here alleged, it must be, philosophically, a property rather than an accident. Hence it cannot be adduced to justify neglect as if it were a flaw in conception or execution. The deserters are trapped. Curiously, the poem's champions have not so far alerted them to their condition. This is not because common sense tells them that embarrassment alone will not send stray audiences flocking back to the fold. It is because they cannot cope with such radical mystification themselves. Instinctively they suppress any suspicion that Spenser really means what he says when he presents his Faerie Queene as 'a continued Allegory, or darke conceit ... knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed' and acknowledges that 'the discourse ... may happily seeme tedious and confused' (L3, 1, 138-39⁴). Besides, long familiarity with the poem and critical sophistication have reduced the impact of its elusiveness - or, as they would put it, the present diagnosis is both exaggerated and crude. The Faerie

⁴ References in this form are to the Letter to Raleigh as reproduced in the Appendix. This, and all other Spenser quotations, are from Poetical Works, edited by J.C.Smith and E.de Selincourt (Oxford, 1912; rpt. 1975).

Queene unreadable, with its superb rhetoric and versification, and its wealth of powerful description? The allegory inaccessible, when everywhere the mode is coming into its own again, after the romantic-symbolist eclipse, and extended introductions to its function in Spenser abound?⁵ The narrative trackless, when it is schematically contained, almost as in Dante, in Books devoted to distinct virtues and full of small-scale patterning, intricate, as in Busirane's tapestry (III.xi) and the wedding of Thames and Medway (IV.xi),⁶ or even straightforward, as in the processions of the Seven Deadly Sins (I.iv) and the Twelve Months (VII.vii)? Compared with the discourse of, say, Deguileville or Langland, is Spenser's not a model of naturally progressing narrative, as allegories go? True, some perplexity remains, and there is a growing consensus that Spenser cannot have cared much for plot.⁷ But surely genre dictates an air of mystery? Not only the poem's ostensible subject matter, questing knights, but also such features as absence of motivation, lack of suspense and supernaturalism, are proper to romance. Inconsequentiality characterizes dreams, too; and although the poem is not formally a dream vision, its fiction might be considered dreamlike, as Hough insists, hinting at a subliminal import.⁸ Alternatively, it might be regarded as myth, as defined by C.S.Lewis in An Experiment in Criticism.⁹ He speaks - but perhaps not with The Faerie Queene in mind - of 'the persistent tendency of humanity to provide myths with allegorical explanations. And after all allegories have been tried, the myth itself continues to feel more important than they'. Spenser could be one of our great visionary poets, in close communication with the world of archetypes.

⁵ e.g. A.C.Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in 'The Faerie Queene' (Oxford, 1961), pp.1-43; Thomas P. Roche Jr, The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' (Princeton, 1964), pp.3-31; Rosemary Freeman, 'The Faerie Queene': A Companion for Readers (London, 1970), pp.59-83; John Erskine Hankins, Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of 'The Faerie Queene' (Oxford, 1971), pp.17-33.

⁶ See Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time (London, 1964), pp.148-55, 182-91.

⁷ See Edmund Spenser: A Critical Anthology, edited by Paul J. Alpers (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.19.

⁸ A Preface to 'The Faerie Queene' (London, 1962), pp.95-99, 131-37.

⁹ (Cambridge, 1961), pp.40-44.

Such qualifications, valid as they may be, dodge the issue. Thus the question is not whether allegory in general enjoys critical favour but whether Spenser's allegory makes sense. Perhaps the prolix disquisitions on 'how it works' seek to promote it as richly suggestive. They cannot but act as a deterrent, though, by their indecisiveness and divergence, if not by their very existence. The reader will be assured that 'the need for narrative coherence may conflict with the need for consistency of thought' or that 'illogicalities inevitably arise in situations where absolutes and relatives jostle one another'. Does he really deserve to be branded 'naive' if such assertions make him restive?¹⁰ Is he not bound to infer that his guides are lost quite like himself? Similarly, The Faerie Queene, no matter how comparatively smooth, remains inherently baffling. Nor, incidentally, can it be taken for granted that Spenser improves on his predecessors: they may not aim at the result he 'almost' achieves in the first place. The generic mysteriousness of romance is cold comfort. Finally, Spenser's fiction does not strike one as too meaningful for words: it seems meaningless, rather. Its mere elusiveness cannot make it numinous by implication. Attempts to induce spurious awe will be resisted. Some may be momentarily carried away by the riotous cult of the unfathomable now practised in certain quarters, but few are genuinely convinced even by Lewis's relatively sober conclusion, over forty years ago, that the poetry 'has really tapped sources not easily accessible to discursive thought'.¹¹ In short, a defence of The Faerie Queene along such lines is a futile corrective. If the cowardly deserters are trapped, so are the seasoned champions. They have certainly made a virtue of necessity: they have not, however, redeemed the poem.

But this is blanket condemnation, inevitably unfair and probably counterproductive. Why not seek common ground and stress that most critics admit to an uncertain grasp at least of the poem's overall design, if only obliquely? After all, nobody follows Upton in blithely crediting the work, in the face of the evidence, with

¹⁰ Freeman, Companion, p.45; Humphrey Tonkin, Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the 'Faerie Queene' (Oxford, 1972), p.26.

¹¹ The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford, 1936; corr. rpt. 1938).

unity of action based on Arthur.¹² Hardly anybody shares Lewis's blind faith in the ways of romance: 'It has been the fate of the Faerie Queene to be attacked where it is strongest. The plan, the story, the invention are triumphant. If they have faults, they are such faults as never deterred any reader except those who dislike romance and would not be allured to read it by any perfections'.¹³ Instead we all admire Hurd's sensible discussion of the poem 'under the idea not of a classical but Gothic composition', finding ourselves drawn towards yet reluctant to accept his conclusion that as an allegorical poem, the method of the Faerie Queene is governed by the justness of the moral: as a narrative poem it is conducted on the ideas and usages of chivalry. In either view, if taken by itself, the plan is defensible. But from the union of the two designs there arises a perplexity and confusion, which is¹⁴ the proper, and only considerable, defect of this extraordinary poem.

To dispel uneasiness about the poem's overall design in particular seems to have been Spenser's main concern in the Letter to Raleigh, which directs the reader 'to the wel-head of the History; that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, [he] may as in a handfull gripe al the discourse' (L136-38). The poet beams confidence in the unity of his creation. Ironically, though, his effort at illumination has itself proved an embarrassment - when it is heeded at all, that is: some critics, unrestrained by any 'intentional fallacy', treat it in cavalier fashion or ignore it altogether, to indulge in the most bewildering varieties of exegesis,¹⁵ which, needless to say, do not reveal the poem's

¹² See the Preface to his edition, as reprinted in The Prince of Poets: Essays on Edmund Spenser, edited by John R. Elliott Jr (New York, London, 1968), pp.196-202.

¹³ English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama (Oxford, 1954), p.389.

¹⁴ Letter VIII, from Letters on Chivalry, as reprinted in English Critical Essays: Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, edited by Edmund D. Jones, The World's Classics, 240 (London, 1922; reset 1947), p.319, 325.

¹⁵ e.g. Harry Berger Jr, The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene', Yale Studies in English, 137 (New Haven and London, 1957); Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago, London, 1971); Isabel G. MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton, 1976); James Nohrnberg, The Analogy of 'The Faerie Queene' (Princeton, 1976).

'fore-conceit', to use Sidney's term.¹⁶ Most critics, however, are prepared to welcome the Letter as a promising guide, only to find that it does not tally with the poem. Thus Arthur, who is discussed at length as though he were its dominating character, appears only incidentally. And the account of the origin of the knights' adventures is, where it can be checked against the poem, repeatedly at odds with it in fact or by implication.¹⁷ Besides, there are quite a few puzzles not directly concerning plot. In short, the Letter seems to disqualify itself. Convinced that the discrepancies are real, critics agree that their business is with the poem as it stands; naturally, since even staunch intentionalists could not allow authorial comments to overrule the evidence of the work.

Nevertheless, many have given thought to the problem. For some it loses much of its acuteness on considering that the Letter is a postscript rather than a preface in the 1590 edition of The Faerie Queene (Books I-III) and, what is more, does not reappear in the 1596 edition (Books I-VI).¹⁸ However, accuracy is hardly a function of relative prominence. And Spenser's withdrawal of the Letter can be construed in more than one way: it need not be a silent admission of its inadequacy. Perhaps he no longer considered it necessary. Perhaps he felt disinclined to recast or expand what is really an introduction to Books I-III in particular. Perhaps the Letter's absence is simply an oversight, or else a reflection of altered external circumstances: the addressee, Raleigh, after his secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton had aroused the Queen's displeasure, never regained the position of favourite courtier that he had enjoyed before 1590.¹⁹ Spenser may have felt that it would be indelicate for his Faerie Queene, dedicated as it is to his sovereign, to advertize its association with Raleigh.²⁰ Alternatively, he may no longer have cared to posture as an obedient servant. (Raleigh

¹⁶ An Apology for Poetry; or, The Defence of Poesy, edited by Geoffrey Shepherd (London and elsewhere, 1965), p.101.

¹⁷ See, for example, Bennett, Evolution, pp.24-38.

¹⁸ Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.20.

¹⁹ Robert Lacey, Sir Walter Raleigh (London, 1973; rpt.1975), pp.149-260.

²⁰ This is really an imponderable matter. Spenser did not withdraw his laudatory reference to the author of Cynthia in the Proem to Book III, which might be thought more offensive.

ordered the Letter, if we are to take the poet at his word: 'being so by you commanded' - L5-6). After all, the Queen had acknowledged Spenser's poetic tribute to her after the appearance of its first instalment. The Dedicatory Sonnets to Elizabeth's statesmen, too, are absent from the 1596 edition. All this remains, of course, speculation. But it does prove one thing: the mere fact that the Letter was not republished does not imply that it must be at odds with the poem of 1590 - or, for that matter, with that of 1596, whose first half is, but for an additional stanza in I.xi and the different ending to Book III, substantially identical. In any case, to play down the status of the Letter is not to explain why it misrepresents the poem.

Among those who have attempted such an explanation two tendencies can be observed. Some take the discrepancies at their face value and dismiss the Letter as all but irrelevant. Owen and Lewis, each in their different ways, are exponents of this tendency. Owen believes that the Letter 'describes a version of The Faerie Queene which Spenser planned in 1590 but never wrote'. His essay certainly expounds some of the difficulties which the Letter raises with admirable lucidity. Yet his argument is too narrow to dictate its conclusion. For one thing, the Letter would be the only piece of evidence that in 1590 Spenser wished to depart from his original plan. Owen offers no suggestions as to why he should, all of a sudden, have become dissatisfied with his work as it stood. For another thing, if the new scheme is as muddled as Owen would have it, can it really be distinguished confidently from the one it is allegedly meant to replace? And then, why did Spenser publish it, if 'he did not find time in the haste of printing, proof-reading, and the like' to adjust his poem?²¹ C.S.Lewis takes another line. As he sees it, the narrative is to be conceived of not, rhetorically, as the embodiment of a definite, consistent and elaborate plan but, romantically, as an organic growth, whose design lends itself only to rough-and-ready rationalisation.²² On this view discrepancies between the poem and any schematic account of it

²¹ "In These XII Books Severally Handled and Discoursed", ELH, 19 (1952), 165-72 (p.165, 171).

²² English Literature, p.379.

are simply in the nature of things. Thus any reason for anxiety seems removed at one stroke. But Lewis's argument does not explain any one of the discrepancies individually: it is vacuous. This becomes painfully manifest when one turns to his point by point denunciation of the Letter in a later study. It is one thing to hold that the mysteries of the creative process are not easily caught in sober expository prose. It is quite another thing to pass this off as the explanation for a Letter bristling with glaringly counterfactual statements. Its tone and structure certainly do not suggest a writer fumbling for safe generalisations. The truth is that Lewis's conception of the poem's genesis is no more than an assumption, and a thoroughly anachronistic one at that. His picture of Spenser the poet as an inspired vates, uttering profundities that can be fully apprehended only 'on the tripod', is clearly dear to his heart. But does it rest on anything more solid than his animus against humanist poetics?²³

Arguments to prove the Letter irrelevant carry little conviction. They go against common sense and look like special pleading. Not unnaturally, quite a few critics prefer to present it as essentially valid. They attribute the discrepancies to the Letter's general purpose, in light of which they can be considered immaterial. Thus Hamilton sees its account of the knights' adventures as 'deliberately formalized': Spenser himself says that they are '"severally [that is, differently] handled and discoursed". But in a preface ... he need not describe ... how they are differently handled'.²⁴ However, 'severally' does not mean 'differently': it means 'in one-to-one distribution', as Owen points out.²⁵ Tuve's important study of medieval 'Allegory of Vices and Virtues' goes a long way towards explaining Arthur as conceptually central to The Faerie Queene.²⁶ Curiously enough, though, she will not see that in the narrative Arthur's role is 'puzzlingly minor'. Nor do the other discrepancies really register. To her Spenser's poem is representative of the

²³ Spenser's Images of Life, edited by Alastair Fowler (Cambridge, 1967), pp.137-40 (p.139).

²⁴ Structure, p.52.

²⁵ 'Spenser's Letter to Raleigh - A Reply', MLN, 75 (1960), 195-97.

²⁶ Chapter Two of Allegorical Imagery: Some Mediaeval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton, 1966).

medieval tradition of Arthurian romance. Its 'fore-conceit', so far from being a unique scheme, is almost trite: 'We must recognize how conventional and unfortuitous his design is, and how likely it is that such a framework was assumed long before the precise statement of it'.²⁷ The Letter, for all its specific inaccuracies, conveys the type adequately enough. But surely to ease the problem in this way is to create a new one: if The Faerie Queene falls so obviously into place, a Letter purporting to 'give great light to the reader' must be oddly superfluous. As it happens, the Letter does not define the poem vis-à-vis medieval romance at all. Instead it discusses it as though belonging with Renaissance romance-epic (Ariosto, Tasso), which it treats on a par with classical epic (Homer, Virgil - see L18-27). Moreover, as an account of that genre it appears to be quite coherent against the background of humanist theory of epic, as has been usefully shown by Nelson.²⁸ Not that this necessarily invalidates Tuve's position: the theory in question is not a structural one. Perhaps, indeed, Nelson takes unfair advantage of this so as to avoid coming to grips with the specific discrepancies unnoticed. But then, who does explain why they are there? The idea that the Letter's essential purpose naturally entails carelessness over minor details, if that is what they are, is by no means inherently compelling.

The Letter, then, like the poem, has its deserters and its champions. And again both parties are trapped. Thus we find our predicament confirmed instead of resolved. Yet this is, paradoxically, encouraging. Prompted to embrace our confusion, we sense salvation at hand. In this chapter I shall try to articulate the solution, which Spenser states sotto voce in the Letter, and to show how it bridges the gap between Letter and poem. Such an attempt more or less presumes correspondence. However, I have no time for procedural scruples. Though the validity of the Letter does indeed depend on whether it agrees with the poem, it is there to illuminate it, not to be justified by it. After centuries of interpretive failure let us not disdain authorial assistance.

²⁷ p.136, n.49; pp.351-52, n.12.

²⁸ The Poetry of Edmund Spenser: A Study (New York and London, 1963; rpt. 1971), pp.116-23.

II One Meaning

Preoccupation with the Letter's apparent inaccuracies tends to obscure a more fundamental incongruity: the information it provides, whether correct or not, does not seem to answer the kind of questions the poem raises in the first place. It does nothing to relieve uncertainty about 'how the allegory works'. Instead it says what the allegory means. And it does this so summarily as to make itself useless, or so it would seem, for anything but the most superficial interpretation. 'In that Faery Queene I meane glory ... in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence ... the knight of the Redcrosse, in whome I expresse Holynes ... Sir Guyon, in whome I sette forth Temperaunce ... Britomartis a Lady knight, in whome I picture Chastity' (l53-72). All this is hardly revealing. Nor, surely, does it qualify as a specimen of the type of reading The Faerie Queene requires. For it subsumes where the poem expands, running, even in its unfinished form, to over four hundred closely printed pages. Allegorical reading cannot properly consist in sticking on labels such as these. Conversely, more than half of the Letter is devoted to an outline of the poem's narrative framework. Yet, in spite of the maze-like fiction, the need for this does not make itself felt. What the Letter has to say about Arthur's story (l46-52) can easily be gleaned from the poem (I.ix.1-15). And while the Letter's circumstantial account of the origin of the titular knights' adventures at the Faery Queen's annual feast (l81-129) does give information not contained in the poem we have, it does not unify the narrative but merely complements it rather irrelevantly. The one major point, that the knights have started out from Faery Court, emerges clearly enough from the poem itself. The reader's detailed knowledge of events at Faery Court, always beyond his horizon once he is immersed in the poem anyway, contributes nothing to his grasp of the fiction.

What are we to make of an explanatory document that is so stupendously uninformative? I propose that the function of the Letter's narrative component has been radically misunderstood. It is not to be treated as plot summary. Spenser directs us to 'the wel-head of the History' so that we may 'from thence gather... the

whole intention of the conceit' - not 'the whole course of events': its extremely limited scope as a plot summary could not possibly enable us so to 'gripe al the discourse' (L136-38). 'Conceit' reminds us that The Faerie Queene, which the Letter's second half discusses in terms of story, is really, as its first half states at once, 'a continued Allegory, or darke conceit' (L3). The 'wel-head' is not a guide to the vehicle of the allegory (the 'History') but a metaphorical definition of its tenor (the 'intention'). Though only part of the 'History', it defines 'the whole intention', which implies that all parts of the 'History' have the same 'intention'. This, in its turn, implies that there is no autonomous 'History': the poem is a collection of synonymous allegorical set pieces masquerading as narrative. The fiction qua story is an insubstantial pageant, a mosaic of vehicles for metaphors skilfully chosen and arranged so as to create the illusion of stories but really disconnected.

On the face of it Spenser's adoption of the role of 'Historiographer' (L82) precludes such a revolutionary adjustment. Does it really, though? 'But because the beginning of the whole worke seemeth abrupte and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of these three knights severall adventures' (L72-75). If this suggests narrative discourse, as it certainly does, it may be because the poet wants to sustain an illusion. The sentence is cleverly non-committal. 'Seemeth' and 'as depending' do not allow us to decide that the appearance of abruptness and dependence is true. Nor does the logic of the sentence as a whole: the account of the adventures' origin might reveal that the appearance is illusory. And then, what of Spenser's statement that the 'Poet historical', in abandoning the method of the 'Historiographer [who] discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions', 'maketh a pleasing Analysis of all' (L76-81)? What could the word 'analysis', which is used here of poetical not critical discourse, mean if not, in accordance with its etymology, the 'unloosing' of the temporal and causal chain basic to narrative proper?²⁹ The abruptness of the poem's opening does not, in fact, arouse any great curiosity about

²⁹ The OED does not instance this passage.

'things forepaste' at all. It affects the reader rather as just one more example of the poem's pervasive inconsequentiality, the puzzling looseness of its constituent episodes. The connection between Spenser's apparent plot summary in the Letter and the poem qua narrative is correspondingly loose, as we have seen.

The narrative component of the Letter to Raleigh merely pretends to be a key to the poem's fiction as such. It is in reality a complementary metaphor for a work which, as the closing paragraph so unmistakably implies, means one and the same thing throughout. But can this implication be taken seriously? Are we to believe that Spenser was a monomaniac, or a colossal bore? This objection presupposes that the interest of allegories lies in establishing their allegorical meaning(s). A brief consideration of the riddle, which rhetoricians commonly classify with allegory,³⁰ will show that this is not so. The point about a riddle is not its solution. Rather, it is the transfiguration into intelligibility of the riddle itself: the elated recognition of how every puzzling element finds its raison d'être in the solution. Similarly with allegory generally. The point is not the tenor for its own sake but the 'revelation' of the vehicle as irradiated by the tenor. Proper reading of allegory is conditional upon but not oriented towards discovery of meaning. That is why allegory so often gives its supposed 'secret' away: Langland's Lady Meed, Spenser's Despair, Milton's Sin and Death, Bunyan's Slough of Despond. To interpret The Faerie Queene is not to extrapolate meanings but to see how its single meaning informs and sustains it in its every detail. It is in this light, and in this light only, that one can endorse Hamilton's insistence on what he calls, not very felicitously, 'the primacy of the literal level'.³¹ It will now be appreciated why Spenser does not indicate 'how the allegory works'. The clamour for methods of decoding arises from the false notion that the reader of allegory must erect structures of meaning on the basis of the text. Not so. He must experience flashes of insight and make imaginative leaps, which are per se incompatible with method.

³⁰ e.g. Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria VIII.vi.44-53; George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, edited by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), pp.186-88.

³¹ Structure, p.29.

A Faerie Queene with a single tenor is by no means an unimaginable monstrosity. But now we face a difficulty of another kind. Are Spenser's statements about what the allegory means, which at the beginning of this section we took almost unquestioningly for broad generalisations, not at odds with singleness of meaning even when interpreted as tightly fitting definitions? Surely glory, magnificence, holiness, temperance, chastity, to say nothing of the qualities to be associated with the titular heroes of Books IV-VI and with unmentioned characters generally, are manifestly different? The Letter's implicit answer is that they are different only in the sense of being different aspects of one and the same thing. ('Aspect' is used strictly here, and throughout this thesis. For one notion to be an aspect of another means that the former is the latter, seen from a particular angle). There are two stages in Spenser's argument. First he says that 'in that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention'. After a digression to point out that in his particular intention both she and Belpheobe 'shadow' Queen Elizabeth, he goes on to say that 'in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular'. This, in spite of the final words, clearly defines the general intention of Arthur, for 'magnificence' is on a par with 'glory', as an abstract noun, not with 'our soveraine the Queene'. Hence magnificence must be a particular aspect of glory. Secondly, Spenser says that magnificence, in its turn, is '(according to Aristotle and the rest) ... the perfection of all the [virtues], and conteineth in it them all' (L53-65).

Unfortunately, though the presence of some such argument is easy to detect, its logic is far from transparent. To begin with, for all Spenser's casualness the equivalence of glory and magnificence, in any sense, is certainly not self-evident. Besides, as a comprehensive term for all the virtues added together, magnificence is a mere flatus vocis, so that it would be meaningless to call any particular virtue an aspect of it. Nor is this sense of magnificence at all obvious and familiar. The poet's reference to 'Aristotle and the rest', while clearly thrown in as a reassuring allusion to a commonplace of ethics, has proved controversial.

Lewis, who assumes, naturally, that Spenser had the Aristotelian tradition in mind, finds that

there is no trait of megaloprepeia (Magnificence) in [Arthur's] character, no slightest indication that he is a large spender. But there is probably a confusion of terms here, due to some bad Latin translation you were using. What you mean is Magnanimity, not Magnificence; megalopsychia, not megaloprepeia. The crown of all the virtues is for Aristotle a right Pride or Magnanimity, which deserves and claims the highest honour.³²

This has considerable prima facie plausibility. As an overarching virtue magnanimity is reminiscent of magnificence as defined by Spenser, while its orientation towards honour parallels that of magnificence towards glory. But is this enough to warrant Lewis's confidence that Spenser really means magnanimity if, as he himself recognizes, Arthur 'has only as much resemblance to the Aristotelian megalopsychos as any good knight was bound to have'? Attempts to prove that the poem does not bear out the Letter, no matter how ill-advised, are legitimate. But to precipitate this reading of the Letter on the assumption that there is no need for it significantly to fit the poem is an intolerable petitio principii. In fact, though Lewis's rendering of Aristotle's account of magnanimity as the crown of the virtues is accurate enough, it is misleading because of what it leaves unsaid: the philosopher's remarks are made in passing. For Spenser's scheme of magnificence as an inclusive virtue to be traced convincingly to the Nicomachean Ethics, this treatise ought to be, structurally, a discussion of the several virtues as constituent elements of magnanimity. It is not. In addition, the philosopher's alleged catch-all ought to derive its content from virtues at least similar to the poet's. It does not, as Lewis is well aware.³³ In short, if it had not been for Spenser's reference to 'Aristotle and the rest', his argument would never have suggested the Aristotelian tradition at all.

³² Images, p.138 (and see Nicomachean Ethics 1123b). The idea is not original with Lewis. As early as the late 17th century we find Dryden speaking, perhaps not inadvertently, of 'magnanimity, which is the character of Prince Arthur' (Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.73).

³³ Images, p.138, 137.

But perhaps this conclusion is premature. How about Spenser's statement, earlier on in the Letter, that 'I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised' (L28-30)? This is another notorious crux, though: Aristotle's Ethics does not present a scheme of twelve virtues. Nor do neo-Aristotelian treatises Spenser could have consulted, supposing his reference warrants the citation of these as analogues. For instance, Francesco Piccolomini, in his Universa Philosophia de Moribus, which Hankins claims to have been the poet's major source, argues that Aristotle ought to have named either ten or twelve virtues, rather than eleven, and frowns particularly at the omission of holiness. Yet he does not adopt the improved scheme himself. Burgersdyck, early in the seventeenth century, does; but even so the result, Aristotle's eleven virtues supplemented by piety, is a far cry from Spenser's scheme.³⁴ The problem has been brought near its solution by Mills. He believes that 'as Aristotle hath devised' modifies not 'the twelve private morall vertues' but 'pourtraict'. 'Spenser's claim ... is that Aristotle devised a method of portrayal rather than a list of twelve virtues. Thus regarded, his allusion is not to the Nicomachean Ethics or its elucidators, but to the Poetics'. This suggestion derives support from the context of the poet's statement, a discussion of epic in relation to its moral purpose, not of moral theory per se. However, 'perfected in the twelve private morall vertues' seems to Mills irreconcilable with Aristotle's stipulation that a poetic character should not be perfect. So he argues that Spenser alludes to the Poetics as understood in the influential commentary of Averroes, who regards poetry as 'the art of praise and blame, and therefore exemplary and paradigmatic in its presentation of virtue and vice'.³⁵ Poets holding such a view would naturally seek to create perfect characters. Aristotle himself does not see poetry as an instrument for moral education. But his stipulation hardly follows. Perhaps, indeed, it applies to characters in

³⁴ Source and Meaning, Chapter I, especially pp.3-5.

³⁵ 'Spenser's Letter to Raleigh and the Averroistic Poetics', ELN, 14 (1976-77), 246-49 (p.247, 248).

tragedy only, as Tasso would have it.³⁶ Be that as it may, Mills, and critics generally, misinterpret Spenser's use of 'perfect', both here and in 'the perfection of all the rest' (L64), as we shall see. Here it suffices to note that recourse to Averroes is not only unilluminating but unnecessary. Spenser's allusion to the Poetics justifies theoretically not Arthur's perfection, whatever that means, but the decision to achieve 'the generall end ... of all the booke [which] is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline' (L9-11) by means of a particular fiction, about Arthur, a decision he has already been at pains to justify by invoking the practice of his epic predecessors. For, as Sidney puts it,

Aristotle ... [says] that Poetry is philosophoteron and spoudaioteron, that is to say, it is more philosophical and more studiously serious than history. His reason is, because poesy dealeth with katholou, that is to say, with the universal consideration, and the history with kathekaston, the particular.³⁷

That is why Spenser immediately goes on to address those to whom 'this Methode will seeme displeasaunt, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large' (L34-36). He never wanders from his topic, the poetic mode.

Spenser's first, specific, reference to Aristotle, then, does not necessarily make his second, more casual one an allusion to that philosopher's scheme of virtues. Tuve would go further. If only critics had not been blinded by these references, she thinks, they would have seen that in the Middle Ages a conception of magnificence as the virtue 'by which we designate all the other virtues if perfected' was precisely the commonplace that Spenser's casualness implies. She marshals an impressive array of analogues, headed by a telling quotation from Caxton's version of the Somme le roi of Frère Lorens, and demonstrates how this conception goes back to Cicero and Macrobius. Admittedly, though, 'Aristotle and the rest' becomes awkward as a result. Nor is her explanation altogether ingenuous. It may be true that 'the uncontaminated, warranted-

³⁶ Discourses on the Heroic Poem, translated by Mariella Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford, 1973), pp.43-44; see also Introduction, p. xxviii.

³⁷ Apology, p.109 (a close rendering of Poetics 1451b).

truly-Greek Aristotle that a modern student tries to isolate and read was neither a possibility nor a desirable possibility to Spenser'.³⁸ One is prepared to allow an imprecise gesture. But it does not quite follow that the poet can afford to be positively incorrect. As a matter of fact, his reference is hardly suggestive of medieval traditions. Or if it is - for there was a strand of medieval thought in which Aristotle was regarded as 'il maestro di color che sanno' (Dante) - it evokes Aquinas. And about him Tuve is conspicuously silent; understandably, since he struggles hard to accommodate Aristotle's definition of magnificence.³⁹ The decisive flaw in her argument lies elsewhere, though. Compared with Lewis's it might seem a major advance. For the medieval works she cites treat magnificence not simply as the crowning virtue rather as Aristotle does magnanimity. They also christianize its content, thus apparently providing a rationale for its relation, in Spenser, to glory, which is hardly Aristotle's purely secular honour. However, the overall structure of these works is not determined by magnificence as an inclusive virtue any more than that of Aristotle's treatise reflects the comprehensive scope he appears to attribute to magnanimity. Nor is this surprising. Magnificence as Tuve defines it on the basis of Lorenz, 'Christian Perseverance, perfecting the virtue by carrying it through to the end',⁴⁰ is not an inclusive virtue at all, in spite of what alternative formulations such as the one quoted previously may suggest: it is, on her own showing, a 'pars' of fortitude. By contrast, magnificence as Spenser defines it is inescapably inclusive. His statement that 'in the whole course I mention the deedes of Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke', though perhaps clumsy, can only mean that Arthur represents holiness in Book I, temperance in Book II, etc., not that in each he represents magnificence as a distinct virtue completing Red Cross's holiness, Guyon's temperance, and so on. Unless Arthur was to have had a Book to himself, which the pattern of The Faerie

³⁸ Allegorical Imagery, p.57, 77.

³⁹ See Hugh MacLachlan, '"In the Person of Prince Arthur": Spenserian Magnificence and the Ciceronian Tradition', UTQ, 46 (1976-77), 125-46 (especially Section I and pp.135-36).

⁴⁰ Allegorical Imagery, p.60.

Queene as we have it makes most unlikely and which the Letter rules out by mentioning 'xii. other knights', not eleven, the poet does not allow for a separate, crowning virtue peculiar to Arthur (L65-67). Tuve's tradition is incompatible with Spenser's programme; all the more so because it does not present magnificence as an aspect of glory. Anyway, perseverance does not fit the Arthur of the poem any more significantly than does magnanimity. True, he perseveres in his search for the Faery Queen. But his comparatively brief and widely scattered episodes are hardly calculated to bring this home, especially since this search itself is not their subject. Nor, surely, does he stand for perseverance in the titular knights' virtues (which must be Tuve's idea): these knights themselves, with their protracted adventures, culminating in the accomplishment of their tasks, persevere far more convincingly than does Arthur, with his intermittent lightning victories.

III The Conceptual Rationale

Spenser's magnificence reflects neither the common medieval conception of this virtue nor the Aristotelian notion of it, or else of magnanimity. Where, then, do we go for its rationale, keeping in mind that it is inclusive, substantial, and equivalent to glory? And how do we account for 'Aristotle and the rest'? To repeat, magnificence is short for all the virtues taken together: it cannot be regarded as an additional virtue. Now though this agrees with the statement that it 'containeth in it them all', it does not seem to square with its definition as 'the perfection of all the rest' (L64-65). For how could magnificence perfect the other virtues unless it is distinct from them? However, this query is illogical. It presupposes that the individual virtues, to be perfect in themselves, all need to be crowned by some other, complementary virtue: a contradiction in terms. Our interpretation of 'perfect' needs adjustment. For this word is ambiguous. It has invariably been assumed that Spenser uses it to mean 'in the state of complete excellence; free from any flaw or imperfection of quality; faultless'. But it can also mean 'in the state proper to anything

when completed; complete; having all the essential elements, qualities, or characteristics; not deficient in any particular' and 'completely corresponding to a definition, pattern, or description'.⁴¹ The word conveys either ultimate degree of accomplishment or, in accordance with (Aristotelian) essentialism, complete embodiment of essence. Spenser uses it in the strictly philosophical sense: something is perfect, τέλειος, when it answers fully to its final cause, its τέλος. Magnificence, as 'the perfection of all the rest', is not a crowning virtue remedying 'the insufficiencies of individual virtues',⁴² but another word for each of these virtues when 'perfect'.

The corollary of this is crucial. It does not make sense any longer to think of all these virtues as adding up to magnificence. It is not an aggregate: it includes all the others as aspects of itself. It is not a mere name but has all the substance of any of its aspects. They unfold it, and it infolds them. Let me enter a caveat here. Spenserians will be familiar with these notions from Wind's discussion of neo-Platonic triads.⁴³ As used in this thesis, however, they do not have Platonic connotations. Nor is there any reason why they should. St Paul is, technically, unfolding when he writes: 'But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, / Meekness, temperance' (singular subject and verb; asyndeton). Conversely, he is infolding when he says: 'For this, Thou shalt not commit adulterie, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steale, Thou shalt not beare false witnesse, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandement, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy selfe'.⁴⁴ Yet nobody would infer that he sat at the feet of Academics.

⁴¹ OED s.v. Perfect a. B I.4; 3,5.

⁴² Alastair Fowler, 'Emanations of glory: Neoplatonic order in Spenser's Faerie Queen', in A Theatre for Spenserians, Papers of the International Spenser Colloquium, Fredericton, New Brunswick, October 1969, edited by Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither (Toronto and Buffalo, Manchester, 1973), pp.53-82 (p.76).

⁴³ Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (London, 1958), p.39.

⁴⁴ Galatians 5.22-23 and Romans 13.9, The Authorised Version of the English Bible, 1611, edited by William Aldis Wright, 5 vols (Cambridge, 1909), V, 423, 358.

Spenser's magnificence is moral perfection in the sense of all-round virtue. It is a general notion, meaningful even before its meaning has been specified and irrespective of whether it can be specified exhaustively, not an expedient to top up a finite scheme of virtues conceived of as separate entities. As such it does indeed agree with an idea common to 'Aristotle and the rest':

Die Stoa führt einen aristotelischen Satz weiter, wenn sie betont, τέλειος sei nur der, der alle sittlichen Fähigkeiten ἀρετὰς besitze, u. τέλεια sei eine Tat nur, wenn sie allen ἀρεταῖ gemäß geschähe, also alle in ihr zusammenwirkten.⁴⁵

The statement that 'magnificence ... (according to Aristotle and the rest) ... is the perfection of all the rest' means not that Aristotle defines magnificence as the perfection of all the virtues, which would be untrue, but that what Spenser calls magnificence is moral perfection as understood by Aristotle. ('According to' means 'in accordance with' - compare its use in L60.) This conception of moral perfection is prior to any particular scheme of virtues - whence the differences between the Stoics and Aristotle in this respect. Therefore the Letter does not burden us with the impossible task of squeezing Spenser's scheme into the Aristotelian mould. The poet's casualness intimates the commonplace nature of his understanding of moral perfection. We need not assume that his equation of it with magnificence must be equally a matter of course. Considering, on the one hand, critical failure to cite the appropriate philosophical tradition and, on the other hand, the poet's casualness in presenting magnificence as an aspect of glory, we should try first to grasp that equation, allowing for the possibility that the other could be peculiar to Spenser.

Few critics discuss Spenser's glory. Even Tuve, with her keen interest in concepts and their relationships, is silent on the subject, perhaps in the conviction that it needs no clarification. However, to judge from those who do deal with it, the Letter's equation of magnificence and glory has not registered; understandably, since the argument is not obviously anchored in the poem: with Gloriana perpetually beyond Arthur's ken it conveys distinctness

⁴⁵ Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament, Volume VIII, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart, 1969), p.71, §3.

rather than equivalence. Not that Gloriana's connotation is itself distinct. Apparently it cannot be pinned down as either earthly or heavenly glory. Hankins virtually contradicts himself. First he associates glory emphatically with honour, stressing that 'while heaven and union with God may be considered the ultimate objective, they are not the immediate objective of the quests in The Faerie Queene'. Yet he ends up saying, after a quotation from St Paul, that 'it is this shimmering vision of an ultimate glory from the virtuous performance of the daily task that provides the theme of The Faerie Queene'.⁴⁶

C.S.Lewis tries to have it both ways by introducing a Platonic perspective: 'Earthly glory would never have moved us but by being a shadow or idolon of the Divine Glory, in which we are called to participate ... It is in the very nature of the Platonic quest and the Eros religion that the soul cannot know her true aim till she has achieved it'. But surely, one must retort, Arthur knows Gloriana, whatever she represents, as his true aim all along? As we shall see later, Lewis rightly rejects the view that Arthur's pursuit of Florimell (III.i, iv) is a sign of inconstancy. Nevertheless,

Oft did he wish, that Lady faire mote bee
His Faery Queene, for whom he did complaine,
Or that his Faery Queene were such, as shee (III.iv.54)

does not quite 'parallel ... the repeated (and always disappointed) belief of the Trojans in Aeneid, III, that they have already found the mansuram urbem'. For these lines imply that he is only too painfully aware that Florimell is not Gloriana - though he certainly does not repent of his wishful thinking.⁴⁷ In short, we have had no more than a tantalizing glimpse of Spenser's conception of glory. No doubt the poet has cast his readers in the role of Arthurs perpetually in pursuit of his Faerie Queene. Let us be 'perfect', though, true to type, and make sure of our bearings.

What could be the relation of glory and magnificence if not one of equivalence? Here no problems seem to have surfaced, in spite of the elusiveness of Spenser's glory. One infers that some critics, Tuve for instance, hold implicitly that magnificence relates to glory

⁴⁶ Source and Meaning, p.35, 54.

⁴⁷ English Literature, pp.382-83.

as effort to reward. Not that they would see virtue as motivated by a desire for ego-boosting acclaim: an implausibly pagan conception. Rather, glory could be the crowning tribute to virtue practised for its own sake. After all, Arthur does not perform in order to impress Gloriana, as far as we can tell. He does pursue Gloriana consciously, though - very much so. Platonizing readers, such as Lewis and Fowler, are not faced with this dilemma. However, this is because they blur Spenser's strictly ethical scheme in a haze of metaphysics. The Faerie Queene hardly invites discussion in terms of 'cosmic rhythm'.⁴⁸ The Platonic doctrine of a variously imperfect world of appearances approximating closely or distantly, as the case may be, a perfect other-world of ideas seems radically incompatible with Spenser's plan to create an image of moral perfection in this world. Its gradualism is, moreover, at odds with the poem itself, which concentrates throughout on the delineation of virtue and vice pitted against each other. We might as well clutch at Spenser's equation of glory and magnificence. Fortunately, as the poet's casualness implies, its rationale is not far to seek: we shall find it in that most popular of Elizabethan books, the New Testament.

The biblical meaning of 'glory' is 'manifestation of God's essence'.⁴⁹ Often the word is used with particular reference to the resurrection life. Thus Peter, writing about Christ, says that 'God ... raised him from the dead, and gave him glorie'.⁵⁰ Similarly Paul, defining the nature of the body's transmutation, says: 'It is sown in dishonour, and is raised in glorie'.⁵¹ However, the resurrection life is 'nothing but' the consummation in Eternity of God's full identification with Man in Time, in Christ.⁵² In Time, therefore, God's glory exists, paradoxically, 'already-not yet'. Hence Paul can exhort his brethren in Christ to 'glorifie God in your bodie', that is, to witness to His presence 'in earthen vessels'.⁵³

⁴⁸ Fowler, 'Emanations', p.75.

⁴⁹ OED s.v. Glory sb. 5 (2b is also relevant, as will soon appear).

⁵⁰ I Peter 1.21. Unless annotated otherwise all quotations will be from The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 edition, introduced by Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1969).

⁵¹ I Corinthians 15.43 (σπείρεται ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ).

⁵² Colossians 1.19; 2.9.

⁵³ I Corinthians 6.20; II Corinthians 4.7.

Now the New Testament also uses 'magnify' for 'glorify' in this sense. Thus: 'As all wayes, so now Christ shal be magnified in my bodie, whether it be by life or by death'.⁵⁴ Spenser's statement that the Faery Queen represents glory and Arthur magnificence in particular means that his poem is about the temporal manifestation of God. Granted, the noun 'magnificence' does not occur in the New Testament in the relevant sense. But as we shall see, the poet has excellent reasons for allowing himself this discrepancy, which in any case is purely formal.

The biblical perspective also provides the rationale for Spenser's equation of glory/magnificence with moral perfection. Man's intended end (τέλος) is to embody God's glory: he has been created in the image of God.⁵⁵ Since Christ is God incarnate, Man in Christ is perfect. Paul sees it as the purpose of his ministry to 'present everie man perfect (τέλειον) in Christ Jesus'.⁵⁶ More specifically, since Man in Christ is, by definition, inspired directly by the Spirit of God, he does His will as a matter of course: he is morally perfect. (This means that his disposition is virtuous, not necessarily that his performance is faultless.) But should 'perfection' not be associated, rather, with glory consummate? Biblical usage suggests otherwise. To give the most telling example, it is at his ignominious death on the cross that Jesus exclaims: 'It is finished' (τετέλεσται) - the marginal gloss, catching the root of the verb, comments that 'Mans salvacion is perfected by the onelie sacrifice of Christ'.⁵⁷ Resurrection does not compensate for life imperfect through death: it vindicates eternally life perfect in obedience unto death.

⁵⁴ Philippians 1.20.

⁵⁵ 'Image' in this context is εἰκων, not εἰδωλον. As Kittel observes, commenting on II Corinthians 3.18, 'diese Ebenbildlichkeit ... ist ... identisch mit der δόξα' (Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament, Volume II, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart, 1935; rpt. 1950), p.395, ll.16-18).

⁵⁶ Colossians 1.28.

⁵⁷ John 19.30.

Let us briefly check the argument so far against the poem.
Here is one of Guyon's rapturous descriptions of his Faery Queen:

In her the riches of all heavenly grace
In chiefe degree are heaped up on hye:
And all that else this worlds enclosure bace
Hath great or glorious in mortall eye,
Adornes the person of her Majestie;
That men beholding so great excellence,
And rare perfection in mortalitie,
Do her adore with sacred reverence,
As th'Idole of her makers great magnificence. (II.ii.41)

Idol, not icon. Yet there is nothing 'shadowy' about this Gloriana, precisely because she is so thoroughly 'idealized'. But then, Guyon is not philosophizing *à la* Lewis, let alone flouting God's jealous commandment that 'sacred reverence' be paid to Him only. Gloriana is Spenser's idol, or allegory: a literary image that is not a likeness. (In the preceding Canto Guyon has been similarly used to convey the emblematic status of the fiction through his comment on the sad spectacle of Mordant and Amavia: 'Behold the image of mortalitie' - 57). According to our hypothesis the Letter to Raleigh defines the poem's theme as God in His full commitment to Man in Time. This could hardly be personified more meticulously than in Gloriana qua 'perfection in mortalitie', containing 'all heavenly grace' in 'this worlds enclosure bace'. Moreover, the Faery Queen is, emphatically, an image of magnificence. This makes sense internally: 'the richesse of all heavenly grace' betoken 'her makers great magnificence', God's Aristotelian megalo-prepeia, so to say⁵⁸ - and, if one may suspect a sly authorial boast, Spenser's huge artistic investment in The Faerie Queene. But inevitably one thinks also of Arthur's magnificence, which is thus equated with glory as 'wealth'. Nor does the poem as a whole necessarily militate against this equation, for all the distinctness of Gloriana and Arthur, noted above. Aspects of a single thing are bound to be different. They may even be polar opposites within equivalence. Gloriana represents God's riches 'heaped up on hye'. The phrase suggests concentration and elevated unattainability, terms clearly applicable to the elusive monarch at the heart of the entire

⁵⁸ For 'glory' as 'riches' see Romans 10.23 and Philippians 4.19. The 'earthen vessels' of II Corinthians 4.7 contain it as a 'treasure'.

fiction. By contrast Arthur, with his triumphant exploits in each of the Books, could well represent those same riches spread abroad, as a precious chain of 'great doing'. Indeed, it is strictly the scattering of wealth that constitutes magnificence. However, in the divine economy to spend virtue is to hoard glory 'already-not yet': Timothy's flock are to 'be riche in good workes ... / Laying up in store for them selves a good fundation against the time to come, that they may obtaine eternal life'.⁵⁹

Our hypothesis also provides the explanatory framework for Nature's cryptic verdict, in the Mutabilitie Cantos:

all things stedfastnes doe hate
And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
They are not changed from their first estate;
But by their change their being doe dilate:
And turning to themselves at length againe,
Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate. (VII.vii.58)

According to Hamilton 'change is interpreted in Aristotelian terms as a becoming. Yet "first estate" suggests also the Platonic notion: the end of growth is "turning" or returning to original perfection. (The Pauline notion of sowing a natural body to raise a spiritual body ... is absent because Nature answers Mutabilitie in her own terms.)'⁶⁰ Such pseudo-commentary refutes itself. If the reason stated excludes the Pauline notion, it excludes the Platonic notion too, which contradicts Aristotle anyway. Besides, the verdict is false 'in her own terms' - whether Mutabilitie's or Nature's - in so far as 'all things' manifestly do not 'turn to themselves' in Time. Significantly, 'Natur's selfe did vanish, whither no man wist' (59), by way of confirmation. And then, glossing change as 'growth' trivializes the issue, since the text associates it with decay: even Jove admits that 'Time ... doth ... all disseise / Of being' (48). Perhaps 'dilate' has given rise to this error, which can distort one's view of the whole poem. 'Mutability, which generations of poets had taken as a subject of complaint, was for Spenser something quite different: a creative process, almost a subject of encomium',

⁵⁹ I Timothy 6.18-19.

⁶⁰ Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, edited by A.C.Hamilton, Longman Annotated English Poets (London and New York, 1977), p.734.

writes Fowler, to conclude that 'The Faerie Queen as a whole could be said to hymn creation in process, rather than created nature'.⁶¹ 'Dilate' means 'expand', to be sure: that is, 'unfold', not 'approximate progressively'. Moreover, here it also has its obsolete sense, 'extend in time' and, indeed, 'delay'.⁶² Nature does not contend that things become perfect by means of change, on the assumption, say, that change is itself providentially guided.⁶³ She asserts that they prove themselves in the midst of destructive change. They work, not work towards, their perfection: commitment, not release, or rather, commitment as release 'at length'. Of course, such language cannot really be used of the material universe. But then, the Cantos are not really cosmological fable. Like the rest of The Faerie Queene they are moral allegory. They define symbolically a virtue, constancy, as Time's prelude to 'stedfast rest ... Upon the pillours of Eternity' (viii.2).⁶⁴

Further sampling may be left till later. Reverting to our general argument, let us see how the proposed rationale solves the two conceptual dilemmas. Glory has now been pinned down. It is earthly glory, yet not secular honour but the manifestation of God in Time. Spenser's theme hinges on christian doctrine as it is most crucially at variance with Platonism, which presents Time as the unreal image of Eternity:

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,⁶⁵
Until Death tramples it to fragments.

Christianity does not urge an escape towards a higher world of essences. It preaches enactment as virtue of God's saving incarnation in His very real creation. Christians do not discard the world: they buy it up with the riches of Christ, redeeming Time⁶⁶ for

⁶¹ Edmund Spenser, p.44, 45.

⁶² OED s.v. † Dilate, v.¹ Obs.

⁶³ pace Sherman Hawkins, 'Mutabilitie and the Cycle of the Months', in Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser, Selected Papers from the English Institute, edited by William Nelson (New York and London, 1961), p.98.

⁶⁴ For an illuminating parallel instance of 'dilate': Amoretti LXVI.

⁶⁵ Shelley, Adonais, stanza 52.

⁶⁶ Ephesians 5.16; Colossians 4.5.

Eternity. If they are nevertheless fired with a quasi-Platonic longing for transcendence, it is through their acute awareness of this redemption as yet to be consummated. Fighting a good fight, they are assured of the 'crowne of righteousness', the 'incorruptible crowne of glorie'.⁶⁷ Yet it still eludes them. Scripture warrants the relation of practice and eschatological expectancy in terms of effort and reward. Thus in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus repeatedly follows his injunctions with the promise that 'thy Father that seeth in secret, he will rewarde thee openly' - 'in the day when all things shalbe reveiled', as the marginal gloss explains.⁶⁸ This terminology does not imply human merit, though; or so the great protestant reformers insist. That Spenser's Arthur is throughout motivated by Gloriana as his reward yet performs away from her, casually, as though 'in secret', now makes sense. The Faerie Queene begins to emerge as the epic of the Reformation in a truly fundamental sense, since it has for its theme morality inspired and validated sola gratia, sola fide. Indeed, it tends to crystallize as calvinist,⁶⁹ in that its organisation around the concept of glory evinces the theocentric position of the Genevan reformer, to whom 'the first purpose of the creation is to embody the fact of God', with 'election ... purely a matter of grace ad solam Dei gloriam'. Also, focussing on virtue as hope, it reflects Calvin's notorious zeal for righteous conduct and echoes the keynote of his thought, suggested by Torrance's dictum that 'if Luther's was the theology of faith and Bucer's that of charity, Calvin's is that of hope'.⁷⁰ But then, calvinism might qualify as the ruling ideology of Elizabethan England, which read the Geneva Bible more than any other version⁷¹ and whose military intervention in France and the Netherlands made her a champion of Genevan protestantism in practice. Spenser's convictions are at home in a national epic.

⁶⁷ II Timothy 4.7-8; I Peter 5.4. ⁶⁸ Matthew 6.4, 6, 18.

⁶⁹ - in spite of Virgil K. Whitaker, The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought, Stanford University Publications, University Series, Language and Literature, Volume VII, Number 3 (Stanford, London, 1950), Chapter IV.

⁷⁰ G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517-1559 (Glasgow, 1963; rpt. July 1976), pp.215-16, 219, 218 (n.4). The printer's device for the 1596 Faerie Queene is singularly apt: ANCHORA SPEI.

⁷¹ A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation (London, 1964), p.288.

While on the subject of the poem's conceptual anchorage, let us dismiss Woodhouse's epoch-making lecture on 'Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene' as a red herring. 'The question is not whether the natural virtues can be ratified by religion before being transcended by it (for all of them can), but whether in the particular instance the motivation and the sanctions of the virtue are from nature or from grace'. Quite so. Spenser presents all his virtues as issuing from God's identification with Man. Actually, it is a priori unlikely that in a poem intended to 'fashion' moral integration he should have wanted to play off nature and grace against each other, establishing a tension and resolving it through a synthesis. In any case, since grace either complements flawed nature (on the catholic view) or else corrects depraved nature (on the protestant view), it is not properly speaking an antithesis to nature: rather, it is its (partial) restoration. And if nature and grace are not susceptible of synthesis, neither are Hooker's and Calvin's views of their relation, seeing that these are mutually exclusive. If, as Woodhouse would have it, 'Spenser tries to do justice to the facts of human experience which support these two rival views', we must not expect a resolution.⁷² Indeed, this seems to be Carol Kaske's position.⁷³ However, her contention that The Faerie Queene is genuinely pluralistic is preposterous, if only because the poem celebrates, in Una, truth's singleness.

IV The Fictional Mode

This heading states the main topic of the entire thesis, which will move, tensely concentrated, within a narrow range. This might suggest Zeal in blinkers. So here is a brief section for Common Sense to introduce the basic points in a relaxed manner. Implicitly the Letter to Raleigh presents the poem as an allegory whose multifarious vehicle is throughout irradiated 'already-not yet' by

⁷² ELH, 16 (1949), 194-228 (p.199, 225).

⁷³ 'Spenser's Pluralistic Universe: The View from the Mount of Contemplation (F.Q.I.x)', in Contemporary Thought on Edmund Spenser: With a Bibliography of Criticism of 'The Faerie Queene', 1900-1970, edited by Richard C. Frushell and Bernard J. Vondersmith (Carbondale and Edwardsville, London and Amsterdam, 1975), pp.121-49.

its triune tenor, glory/magnificence/(any) virtue. Spenser's mode symbolizes his theme: puzzles as epiphanies. Self-righteous interpreters labour in vain. The poem's meaning is given. Through grace its readers can be atoned with their Father that sees in secret, though they shall have to wait till Doomsday to be illuminated openly. In the meantime nothing could steady our vision more effectively than the knowledge that The Faerie Queene, apparent narrative, is really a glorified moral treatise. A rare piece of biographical evidence confirms this. Lodowick Bryskett, in his Discourse of Civil Life, reports how, during a gathering of friends in Ireland, he had urged the poet to give a systematic exposition of moral philosophy. Spenser declined on the grounds that he had 'alreedy undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse under the title of a Faerie Queene to represent all the moral vertues'.⁷⁴ The situation, which, to be sure, may be a fiction, implies even so that his meaning is abstract. Also, as we have seen, the Letter defines the Faery Queen, Arthur, Red Cross, Guyon and Britomart as concepts. These characters are not more or less glorious, magnificent, holy, temperate and chaste persons but personifications of 'perfect' virtues. They do not exemplify what they represent; they symbolize it. For as concepts they cannot go into the making of real stories: the categories of the world of stories (place, time, causation, interaction, personality, moral stature, etc.) simply do not apply to concepts.

To urge readers to abandon the poem as narrative, however inconsequential as such, is to demand a sacrifice - a meaningful one. Spenser leads us to cherish the illusion of genuine temporal sequence. Our frustrated response symbolizes Man's reluctance to accept that he cannot make history moral. This tragic failure need not be played down. It can be embraced realistically in the assurance that in Man God redeems history. Similarly we need not dissemble disappointment at the fiction's ultimate incoherence, precisely because we are prepared for its greater glory. At the same time we must disarm any suspicion that our transformation of its logical status involves 'reducing' persons to personifications,

⁷⁴ Spenser, Poetical Works, Introduction, p.xxvi.

in the sense of depriving them of their human impact, of precluding an emotional response. Quite the contrary. Personifications are not representations of persons which, oriented conceptually, remain primitive or wooden. They are humanisations of concepts into pseudo-persons for the very purpose of enabling these concepts to engage the reader emotionally as well as intellectually. Very often, of course, Spenser's characters do not come anywhere near inviting the kind of empathy characters in novels commonly do - as even those who would press for a proto-novelistic reading are bound to recognize. But there is no reason why they should, since the poem is not generically akin to the novel. The comparison should be with abstract discourse. An example will show the point. Even such a decidedly flat character as Archimago is, simply through being introduced, with powerful rhetoric, as 'that cunning Architect of cancred guile' (II.i.1), far more effective in mobilizing the reader's resentment against the deceptiveness of appearances, which is what he stands for, than any purely philosophical discussion of the subject could ever be.⁷⁵ 'So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule' (L44-45). Spenser's sentiment, which epitomizes the humanist view of poetry, even when it is not read allegorically,⁷⁶ applies a fortiori to allegory proper.

'Ensample' does indeed mean 'historical fiction' generally, including allegorical fiction, as opposed to 'rule' or 'precept'; not 'literal exemplum' as opposed to 'metaphor for virtue'.⁷⁷ The truism does not contradict 'continued Allegory'. Nor is it hard to see that Spenser's discourse does not really exemplify virtues. We may take our cue from Lewis's observation, quoted earlier, that Arthur 'has only as much resemblance to the Aristotelian megalopsychos as any good knight was bound to have' and our subsequent discovery that he does not behave like a paragon of perseverance either. We may generalize: neither he nor the titular heroes exemplify anything more specific than knightly action. In principle,

⁷⁵ Alpers rightly draws attention to The Faerie Queene as rhetoric, but wrongly supposes that this is to obviate the problems raised by its narrative (The Poetry of 'The Faerie Queene' (Princeton, 1967), Chapter One).

⁷⁶ See, for instance, Sidney on the Aeneid: Apology, pp.119-20, 124-25.

⁷⁷ pace Nelson, Poetry, p.130.

of course, there is nothing incongruous about the idea of military adventures being conducted in a holy, temperate, just, courteous and even, at a pinch, chaste and friendly manner. The question must be asked whether those of Spenser's knights correspond to this idea. And the answer is negative. Their literal behaviour per se does not differentiate them morally for us. We label them on the basis of non-literal aspects of their exploits. For instance, we associate Red Cross with holiness not because killing dragons is a saintly occupation but because Spenser, or the tradition he draws upon, has moulded the dragon into a symbol of unholiness. Anyway, for the poet to inculcate the virtues as practised by knights would be an altogether pointless limitation of scope. He may have written specifically for an audience of knights, but these would hardly have been of the type that engages in dragon-slaying and the like.

This may seem labouring the obvious. But if so, why has the obvious conclusion not been drawn, namely that the fiction must be symbolic rather than exemplary? Why has Spenser not been credited with modal consistency? Why do critics prefer to steer an impossible middle course, allegorizing on and off in a most arbitrary fashion and tortuously reincorporating the resulting meanings into the fiction, thus salvaging a story that Spenser certainly did not write and could not reasonably expect to be reconstructed? Why, for instance, do they not recognize that vanquishing Error (with a capital E) just is not the sort of thing that can be done by a particular knight at a particular stage of a particular adventure, in other words, that Red Cross cannot be a person?⁷⁸ To rescue the story it would have to be assumed that Error does not mean Error but a particular error committed by Red Cross. Now Red Cross does not commit any such error, or if he does, the poet has, perversely, concealed it. For his entry into the Wandering Wood does not qualify: taking shelter from a thunderstorm in a forest is hardly erroneous (it is very sensible) - nor, for that matter, is decapitating a monster in any way truthful. Red

⁷⁸ The point seems to have escaped Alpers (Poetry, pp.335-38), Evans (Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism: A Commentary on 'The Faerie Queene' (Cambridge, 1970), pp.92-93), Freeman (Companion, pp.59-67), Hamilton (Structure, pp.29-43), Nelson (Poetry, p.173), to mention only a few.

Cross is not an individual knight making a particular slip and promptly rectifying his mistake but a personification. Spenser presents him as going into the Wandering Wood and confronting Error because to be on this side of Eternity is to be subject to error: the wood and its denizens are particular fictions symbolizing this unfortunate circumstance in general. Spenser also presents him as defeating Error because he stands for Man in Christ, who is the Truth⁷⁹ (highlighted in Una, who, however, still goes veiled and has to enjoin faith - I.i.4, 19). The episode expresses emblematically one aspect of salvation in Time, 'already-not yet'. It is not a fragment from an imaginary biography stylized for the purpose of moral instruction. It ought to read 'like a self-contained mini-story'.⁸⁰ And Spenser certainly marks it off:

So forward on his way (with God to frend)
He passed forth, and new adventure sought;
Long way he travelled, before he heard of ought. (28)

This suggests the very opposite of a purposeful quest with a clearly envisaged goal. Now this inconsequentiality characterizes the story of Red Cross throughout. It is fascinating to see Kaske, in her study of his battle with the Dragon, hovering on the brink of the non-narrative abyss without the courage to jump in.⁸¹ The adventures apparently preceding this task are obviously not connected with it literally. Even among themselves they are more or less evidently incoherent. As Nelson puts it, 'if plot is soul, the poem cannot escape damnation'.⁸² The assumption that, nevertheless, they all prepare Red Cross for his final encounter, shared by most critics, involves an unwarranted interiorisation of his outward actions: a translation into inner events, the psychological rationale for whose sequence is thought up by the reader. Let us forbear.

⁷⁹ John 14.6, 17.

⁸⁰ p.2 above.

⁸¹ 'The Dragon's Spark and Sting and the Structure of Red Cross's Dragon-Fight: The Faerie Queene, I.xi-xii', as reprinted in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, edited by A.C. Hamilton (Hamden, Conn., 1972), pp.425-46 (especially p.443).

⁸² Poetry, pp.133-35.

However, what about those episodes that do seem to be literally significant? For instance, are Paridell and Malbecco (III.x) not truly (cautionary) exempla of unchastity and jealousy? This objection presupposes, incorrectly, that characters enacting what they represent must be people rather than personifications. Gluttony (I.iv.21-23) is none the less a personification for being literally a glutton. The fact that, unlike Gluttony, Paridell and Malbecco act out a story need not imply that they are persons. It seems to be a realistic fabliau. But the strength of appearances cannot be decisive. Spenser resolves uncertainty by transforming what appears to be the man Malbecco into the personification Jealousy (60). Since such a transformation is logically impossible, Malbecco, and therefore the other characters in his story too, must be personifications all along. Their names may not indicate this unequivocally. But then, they ought not, if the illusion of narrative is to be sustained.

Guyon's adventure at the Bower of Bliss (II.xii) similarly fails to meet the requirements of an exemplum, admittedly dressed up allegorically, of (sexual) temperance put to the test. Many critics, reading literally, have been aghast at Guyon's destruction of so enchantingly beautiful a place, and rightly so.⁸³ Convinced though we are that the knight is up against real evil, his action continues to jar, especially since we must accept Brooke's splendid refutation of C.S.Lewis's still influential characterisation of the Bower as an evil antitype of the Garden of Adonis (Art versus Nature, sterile versus generative sex).⁸⁴ The passage heightens the suspicion of some, raised by the allegorical mode generally, that the poet is schizophrenic, committed to morality and sensuousness alike without the ability to reconcile them. But they have missed the logical cruxes hidden beneath the psychological dilemma. Thus 'the tempest of [Guyon's] wrathfulness' (83) hardly exemplifies temperance. Conversely, stanza 51 presents the luscious Bower as a locus of temperance:

⁸³ e.g. Hough, Preface, pp.161-66; Alpers, Poetry, p.306.

⁸⁴ 'C.S.Lewis and Spenser: Nature, Art and the Bower of Bliss', CamJ, 2 (1948-49), 420-34. Lewis and Brooke are conveniently juxtaposed in Essential Articles, ed. Hamilton, pp.3-12, 13-28.

Thereto the Heavens alwayes Joviall,
 Lookt on them lovely, still in stedfast state,
 Ne suffred storme nor frost on them to fall,
 Their tender buds or leaves to violate,
 Nor scorching heat, nor cold intemperate
 T'afflict the creatures, which therein did dwell,
 But the milde aire with season moderate
 Gently attempred, and disposed so well,
 That still it breathed forth sweet spirit and holesome smell.

The wanton enchantress and her realm symbolize the lure of intemperance as Man's nostalgia for the natural temperance of Eden, where he enjoyed ἀ-κρασία in the sense of freedom from any need for self-control: the bliss forfeited irrevocably through the Fall. Art does not vitiate the Bower. It signals that Nature's Paradise is no longer. So does Acrasia qua witch. (One notes that she does not literally bewitch, transform, her prime victim, Verdant.) Moral temperance, which preserves bare life in the wrack, brings home more forcibly than any other aspect of magnificence that to inherit God's grace is to acknowledge and appropriate God's curse. Hence Guyon's wrath. To upgrade an expletive, Acrasia is goddamn lovely. Nor does she exemplify sexual excess. She has merely had an orgasm, Man's keenest physical pleasure and so the symbol for unfallen Nature. We should trust the fiction, instead of cheapening it into a pastiche of pornography. At the same time we should demythologize it and realize that it is not about sex at all.

To read Spenser's allegory one needs not emotional restraint but logical discipline. Many critics talk casually of Arthur seeking glory instead of or as well as Gloriana, or else discuss his search so vaguely that they can be taken to mean either.⁸⁵ Obfuscation of this sort, however understandable, has to be denounced vigorously. In the poem Arthur seeks Gloriana. This needs to be interpreted, of course. However, you cannot interpret Gloriana without interpreting Arthur as well. To interpret only her is to make nonsense of his geographical search. Besides, could he really be informing inquisitive interlocutors of his purpose in life, glory, by means of an allegorical tale (I.ix.1-15)? To avoid these

⁸⁵ Lewis, English Literature, p.382; Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p.137; Tonkin, Courteous Pastoral, p.74; MacCaffrey, Anatomy, p.85.

awkward implications you might see Arthur as seeking both glory and Gloriana, were it not that her name rules out the dissociation of concept and woman. She is an 'idol', a symbolic construct. And so is he. Nor is his meeting with Prays-desire (II.ix.36-39) evidence to the contrary.⁸⁶ In the fiction she is a character, like Gloriana, not Arthur's aspiration inside his head. You cannot treat Prays-desire as a personification, which she undoubtedly is, without treating Arthur likewise: people do not converse with symbols. That she answers Arthur's censure with the retort that he is like herself merely confirms that they are equivalent personifications. If you want to read The Faerie Queene as story, you must respect the fiction as Spenser wrote it. To interpret it you must conceptualize it whole. Tinkering with the narrative is out.

Examples such as these increase one's confidence that Spenser's fiction is fundamentally and continuously allegorical, as the Letter says. On this view the 'undue' importance it attaches to Arthur ceases to be an argument against its validity. Narrative prominence cannot be a criterion where narrative is illusory. Arthur is conceptually dominant, in that he stands for all the virtues. The appearance of a minor role results from Spenser's decision to farm out the several aspects of magnificence to 'xii. other knights', a decision taken simply, as he says, 'for the more variety of the history', that is, for the sake of a richly diversified pseudo-narrative (L67-68). Thus we can explain a discrepancy which we could not explain away, for instance by invoking Arthur's supposed 'perfection' in comparison with the titular heroes he has to assist. For the widespread misinterpretation of the word⁸⁷ fails to make narrative sense. Arthur certainly does not complete the knights' adventures: they tackle their ultimate antagonists unaided by him.⁸⁸ Nor does he fulfil their moral potential. Flawed characters are not perfected by somebody else's ethical superiority. How could

⁸⁶ - in spite of Lewis, Images, p.138; Freeman, Companion, p.157; Douglas Brooks-Davies, Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': A Critical Commentary on Books I and II (Manchester, 1977), p.166.

⁸⁷ e.g. Woodhouse, 'Nature and Grace', pp.209-12; Hamilton, Structure, pp.77-79, 98-99; Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp.135-38 ('Magnificencia always comes in when the hero is "used up"'); Evans, Heroism, pp.13-14, 105, 133, 200; Tonkin, Courteous Pastoral, p.74.

⁸⁸ Compare Thomas Warton, Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, pp.101-102.

Arthur overcome Red Cross's pride for him if Red Cross cannot overcome it himself? Or what comfort would there be for Red Cross in the thought that Arthur can defeat his own pride? In fact Arthur does neither: he slays Orgoglio. We must not tamper with the story by spiritualizing the Prince into a sudden influx of God's grace, as though Spenser thought of man as, generally speaking, able to cope quite happily under his own steam and needing divine support only in an emergency. For that matter, it is arbitrary to suppose that dallying with Duessa exposes the vulnerability of Red Cross's morality any more than do straying in the Wandering Wood or fainting before Despair. Arthur does not really rescue the knights: he substitutes for them; or rather, they substitute for him elsewhere. What he is left with makes for a fictional pattern of symbolic import. His more or less brief recurrence in each Book to represent its virtue, in conjunction with its titular hero, conveys magnificence in particular: expansion into undifferentiated virtue as compression into glory. Structurally The Faerie Queene may survive the evaporation of its narrative.

V Gloriana and Arthur

It has never, I think, been mooted that we should reject the title Spenser gives so emphatically to his work (L2), though the discrepancy between the major status the Letter ascribes to Arthur and his apparently subsidiary role in the poem is paralleled ad absurdum in the Faery Queen's virtual absence from a poem named for her. Why have critics not taken exception? Probably because the Faery Queen 'shadows' Elizabeth. If the poem celebrates its dedicatee, it is only natural that its title should advertize this somehow. Now the appearances of all the other characters with whom Elizabeth is, or may be, associated, such as Belphebe, Una, Britomart, Mercilla, are strictly localized. By contrast, the appearances of the Faery Queen, though far less prominent and always by way of flashback, are far more evenly distributed, so that she is the obvious candidate for an eponymous heroine. True, this explanation tends to ignore that Spenser, strangely, sees no need for

the importance he attaches to his complimentary reference to be borne out by a correspondingly substantial narrative.⁸⁹ Yet critics might well accept it, arguing that the incongruity is only typical: the historical allegory seems to be an extraneous element generally, as though the poet had felt obliged to incorporate it in spite of himself, with predictably mindless results.⁹⁰ After all, the excitement of ferreting out allusions soon gives way to the sobering realisation that, as an indirect account of Elizabeth's reign, the poem is random in its selection of events, insensitive to their relative importance, and disconcertingly simple-minded in its presentation of them. If you are interested in real history, with all its tensions and complexities, The Faerie Queene is just about the last book you should consult. Even a quite pointed and detailed passage such as the Mercilla episode (V.ix), which alludes definitely to the trial of Mary Queen of Scots, is, as a rendering of what happened, crude to the point of distortion: Spenser virtually glosses over the crucial event, Mary's execution. Of course, encomiastic literature observes style and decorum: not to falsify, though, but to focus on what it singles out for praise, shorn of all irrelevancies. Spenser's poem turns its back upon history in the very act of referring to it. Take Gloriana. It is just as well that we have the poet's word for it that she stands for his sovereign (l54-55), for she is the opposite of a striking likeness: Elizabeth reduced to queen, virgin and inspirer of heroic action. No wonder that the historical allegory tends to be written off as a half-hearted attempt to bring the poem into line with epic practice and with the fashionable cult of the Virgin Queen; or even to be denounced as an incipient disease: 'Spenser was the instrument of a detestable policy in Ireland, and in his fifth book the wickedness he had shared begins to corrupt his imagination'.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cain, in the wake of Fletcher, invokes the 'taboo of the ruler' (Praise in 'The Faerie Queene' (Lincoln, Nebr. and London, 1978), p.112). While not demonstrably wrong, this smacks of 'lucus a non lucendo'.

⁹⁰ Lewis, Tuve and many 'myth' critics are influentially silent or negative about the historical allegory. O'Connell spurns it in favour of his own discovery, the historical dimension (Mirror and Veil: The Historical Dimension of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' (Chapel Hill, 1977), p.13, 125-26, 156).

⁹¹ Lewis, Allegory of Love, p.349.

But can such views be countenanced? Is it plausible that the poet should have compromised the moral and aesthetic integrity of his work by a purely adventitious element? Surely the very dullness of the historical allegory as commonly conceived of suggests that this conception might be inadequate. Considering Spenser's theme, Time's redemption, the poem's averted immersion in history seems too pointedly appropriate to be ignored. More particularly, we know now that the role of the Faery Queen is truly central when measured properly, in terms of conceptual inclusiveness rather than of narrative prominence. Her absent presence symbolizes (virtue as) hidden glory. Critics assume that the historical allegory is a distinct layer of meaning, which ought, but fails, to be interesting in itself. Now as a continued metaphor with a single tenor the poem must lack any such additional layer of meaning. The historical allegory can only be either of two things: the poem's abstract tenor as seen in a particular historical phenomenon or else a quasi-historical vehicle for that tenor. The Mercilla episode is an example of the latter. Its subject is not the trial of Mary but mercy and justice in general, as aspects of magnificence. For once, however, the fiction embodying the tenor is not purely imaginary but patterned after a recent historical event - up to a point: Spenser can, and must, emancipate history. He does not provide an oblique and flat analogue to an exciting event but skilfully adapts this event to his poem's purpose, thus enhancing the point of his mode. Episodes of this type do not mean history: they use history to mean magnificence.

Gloriana is an example of the other type of historical allegory. She does indeed mean Elizabeth; but she does in virtue of meaning glory: the 'generall intention' includes the 'particular', which inevitably accompanies it as its 'shadow' (L56). Gloriana means Elizabeth in so far as Elizabeth, like Gloriana, represents glory in the biblical sense - which she does in virtue not of her personality or her political career but of precisely those few features pinpointed in Gloriana. Thus the majesty of her office, earthly kingship, represents the glory of the citizens of God's Kingdom reigning uncertainly in anticipation of their everlasting

reign.⁹² Similarly, virginity represents 'already-not yet' the freedom from generation and death that the faithful shall enjoy. We must not expect Gloriana to be an absorbingly interesting portrait of Elizabeth as a person and a politician. Indeed, it would have been lèse-majesté for Spenser to divert the Queen's subjects, for whom he writes, with such matters. Gloriana as Elizabeth reminds contemporary readers of The Faerie Queene, breathtakingly, that their hope of glory, rekindled by the poem, finds its concrete historical symbol and seal in their very own monarch. This reading seems preferable to Cain's view that Spenser treats Elizabeth, initially at least, as goddess and mediatrix - an unlikely heresy. Also, it forestalls his notion that in the later Books Spenser, disappointingly, relapses from humanist idealism into medieval Augustinianism, thus wrecking his poem as encomium.⁹³ By the way, the Letter implicitly warrants the distinction between two types of historical allegory. Spenser says that his sovereign 'beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady' (157-59), which are shadowed in Gloriana and Belpheobe. Since this dichotomy, reflecting the common sixteenth century conception of the king's two bodies,⁹⁴ is exhaustive, one infers that other characters associated with the Queen do not shadow her.

The preceding paragraph confirms indirectly The Faerie Queene's conceptual rationale. Gloriana is not a person loosely connected with some vague notion of glory and, in addition, a complimentary gesture in Elizabeth's direction but a tightly packed symbol of exactly definable glory. Even her sex, though reflecting that of Spenser's ruler and also calculated to suggest a love story, has the required symbolic anchorage: 'The woman is the glorie of the man'.⁹⁵ Her city, Cleopolis, falls into place as a complementary metaphor. Are we to emphasize, with Kaske, the contrast Red Cross discerns between it and the New Jerusalem:

⁹² 'Ye reigne as Kings without us, and wolde to God ye did reigne' (I Corinthians 4.8); 'They shal reigne for evermore' (Revelation 22.5).

⁹³ Praise, pp.51-54, 184.

⁹⁴ See Nelson, Poetry, p.124.

⁹⁵ I Corinthians 11.7.

Till now, said then the knight, I weened well,
 That great Cleopolis, where I have beene,
 In which that fairest Faerie Queene doth dwell,
 The fairest Citie was, that might be seene;
 And that bright towre all built of christall cleene,
 Panthea, seemd the brightest thing that was:
 But now by prooffe all otherwise I weene;
 For this great Citie that does far surpas,
 And this bright Angels towre quite dims that towre of glas.
 (I.x.58)⁹⁶

Or are we to concentrate, with Cain, on the Hermit's rejoinder, in which Gloriana's city is nevertheless related to heaven:⁹⁷

Yet is Cleopolis for earthly frame,
 The fairest peece, that eye beholden can:
 And well beseemes all knights of noble name,
 That covet in th'immortall booke of fame
 To be eternized, that same to haunt,
 And doen their service to that soveraigne Dame,
 That glorie does to them for guerdon graunt:
 For she is heavenly borne, and heaven may justly vaunt. (59)

Why not respect the text, do both, and steer safely between the Scylla of pluralism and the Charybdis of Platonism? That means renouncing the habit of intermittent allegorisation, though. It is not as though Red Cross faces two alternative and, as Kaske sees it, incompatible ways of life, action and contemplation. The episode does not mean, literally, that Red Cross should continue to pursue fame instead of gazing at the New Jerusalem. This city is a biblical metaphor for Eternity, the resurrection life. Now 'kein Aug' hat je gespürt, kein Ohr hat je gehört solche Freude'.⁹⁸ As yet Spenser must do without 'that Sabaoth's sight' (VII.viii.2). You can see it only as a symbolic vision, 'in the spirit', with St John in the Apocalypse. Yet Red Cross sees physically what presupposes Nature's annihilation. This paradox disqualifies him as a person having to make his 'choice of life'. As an aspect of magnificence he has no option. Logic dictates the prohibition of

⁹⁶ 'Pluralistic Universe', especially pp.132-33. The New Jerusalem is not, as she says, egalitarian: 'sam', in the preceding stanza, means 'together', not 'equal'.

⁹⁷ Praise, p.113.

⁹⁸ - from the last verse of 'Wachet auf', the famous hymn of Spenser's German contemporary Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608): a relevant contextualisation of I Corinthians 2.9.

the Hermit Contemplation (63), so absurdly out of character. In another sense, too, he has no option. Whereas John is conveniently carried onto the mountain to inspect the heavenly city from close quarters,⁹⁹ Red Cross and Contemplation alike strain to see it from 'far off', neither climbing the 'litle path, that was both steepe and long' (55). In their perspective the New Jerusalem is Cleopolis, which, as Gloriana's residence, remains equally elusive. Or rather, the two cities are distinct aspects of one thing, glory in Time. For Cleopolis is not secular. Its tower, so far from alluding to the pagan Pantheon,¹⁰⁰ makes it 'wholly God's'. Nor is the fame to be found there a pagan value, as Kaske would have it. Gloriana's knights are not persons thirsting for worldly honour. They are virtues, and thus, metaphorically, God's κλέος or fama: the indirect, wayward, manifestation of His presence.

'A man is known by the company he keeps'. The saw becomes an axiom with personifications such as Arthur. We have already glimpsed him in conversation with Prays-desire. In the bible 'praise' usually signifies not a human tribute to a human performance but a divinely prompted rehearsal of the magnalia Dei.¹⁰¹ It refers to speech acts as the proclamatory aspect of, not as distinct from, God's gracious involvement with Man. Hence 'praise' is a focussed synonym of 'magnify' and 'glorify'.¹⁰² One begins to see why Arthur and Prays-desire emerge equivalent from their little altercation. Also, Spenser's comment following her name, 'that by well doing sought to honour to aspire' (II.ix.39), neatly aligns her with magnificence as against glory. But why this particular focus, praise? Why Prays-desire? And whence the dispute? To answer these questions we need to remember that Arthur meets her under the rubric of temperance. As such magnificence sustains a doomed existence, as we have seen, reproaching Man with Paradise Lost rather than offering him a foretaste of Paradise Regained.¹⁰³ Qua

⁹⁹ Revelation 21.10-22.

¹⁰⁰ 'Pluralistic Universe', p.132.

¹⁰¹ 'Open thou my lippes, ô Lord, and my mouth shal shewe forthe thy praise' (Psalm 51.15).

¹⁰² These terms, inherently less specific, can be focussed similarly through context, as in the Magnificat, and in 'the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God' (Luke 1.46, 2.20).

¹⁰³ p.34 above.

temperance God's salvation remains dumb in spite of itself. The poet describes Prays-desire as follows:

In a long purple pall, whose skirt with gold
Was fretted all about, she was arayd;
And in her hand a Poplar braunch did hold. (37)

For Brooks-Davies 'her purple and gold signify social position and hence, again, desire for glory (according to Ripa, 202 Honour or Glory (Honore) is dressed in purple because it is the royal colour and sign of the highest honour)'.¹⁰⁴ This is unsatisfactory on two counts. Firstly, the attributes of achieved social honour do not tally with Prays-desire's frustration (38). Secondly, the citation of Ripa hardly identifies Prays-desire as Honore, since they have in common only the wearing of purple.¹⁰⁵ The iconography of Prays-desire demands the biblical interpretation. She is wearing a pall. The OED quotes Spenser's lines as an instance of the general meaning, 'robe, cloak, mantle'. However, the specific meaning, 'robe or mantle put upon the sovereign at coronation', is more to the point.¹⁰⁶ When Christ is crowned, with a crown of thorns, by Pilate's soldiers, 'they put on him a purple garment'.¹⁰⁷ Temperate Man reigns with Christ in his Passion, mortifying the passions. (Appropriately, a pall is also 'a cloth, usually of black, purple, or white velvet, spread over a coffin, hearse, or tomb'.¹⁰⁸) The rustless gold of Eternity shows only marginally: the skirt 'fretted all about' (contrast Florimell's 'garments all ... of beaten gold', III.i.15). As for the poplar, Brooks-Davies rightly sees it as an emblem of Hercules. It associates Arthur with this 'type of heroic virtue',¹⁰⁹ as do his twelve-fold exertions. But here Spenser's point is more subtle and specific. According to Servius Hercules crowned himself

¹⁰⁴ Critical Commentary, p.167.

¹⁰⁵ Ripa describes Honore thus: Giovane bello, vestito di Porpora, & coronato d'Alloro, con'un'asta nella mano destra, & nella sinistra con un Cornucopia, pieno di frutti, fiori, & fronde' (Iconologia, Facsimile of the Roman edition of 1603, introduced by Erna Mandowsky (Hildesheim, New York, 1970), p.202).

¹⁰⁶ s.v. Pall sb.¹ II 5 and 6b.

¹⁰⁷ John 19.2.

¹⁰⁸ OED s.v. Pall sb.¹ I 4.

¹⁰⁹ Critical Commentary, p.166.

with poplar leaves on going down to Hades for his twelfth labour (or, alternatively, on returning from it): his sweat made one side of the leaves white, while the other remained black.¹¹⁰ Temperance is magnificence victoriously struggling down in Hell (evidently so in the Cave of Mammon episode - II.vii). There it cannot anticipate the incorruptible crown of glory that awaits it as magnificence. It sees only a poplar branch, the promise of a reward stained by effort and painfully evoking the condition that requires it.

Arthur has other associates with tell-tale names, his squire Timias and his tutor Timon. The usual derivations, though, from *τίμιος* (honoured) and *τιμή* (honour), are not sufficiently exact. Timias, when traced to the adjective, is anomalous in its last vowel, for a man. It seems to imply a nominal form, *τιμία*, which, however, does not exist. What does exist is the privative *ἀ-τιμία*: St Paul uses it in antithesis to *δόξα*, as we have seen.¹¹¹ The squire's name therefore means heavenly glory, which indeed does not (yet) exist except as submerged in Time, the English resonance of his name. Timon, the present participle of *τιμῶ*, an occasional variant of *δοξάζω* in the New Testament,¹¹² similarly means Time glorifying (God). As Arthur's foster father Timon stands for Time fostering glory, the offspring of Eternity, as virtue. He is, emphatically, old (I.ix.4), and Arthur receives a 'long education' (I.47), 'all his dayes' (I.ix.4) - the specification does not make literal sense. Virtue is co-extensive with Time, in other words, both quasi-endless yet even so dying into or being educated, 'led out', towards Eternity. In the 1590 edition Timon has a second name, Cleon (I.ix.9). Though the accompanying list of Faults Escaped already corrects it to Timon,¹¹³ it is hardly a misnomer, being the present participle of *κλέω* or *κλείω* (make famous, in the sense of 'spread the fama of ...'). The poet's pretended slip consolidates Timon's status as a personification.

¹¹⁰ Commentarii in Virgilium, edited by H. Albertus Lion, 2 vols (Göttingen, 1826), I, 467 (on Aeneid VIII.276) and II, 146 (on Eclogues VII.61).

¹¹¹ p.22, n.51.

¹¹² Compare John 8.49 and 50; or 12.23 and 26.

¹¹³ Poetical Works, Critical Appendix, p.645.

Arthur's own name is not obviously symbolic. Literally it seems almost perverse, though. As C.S.Lewis taunts, 'you say I chose the historye of king Arthure. But you didn't. There is no Uther in your poem, no Mordred, no Guinevere, no Launcelot, no wars with the Saxons. It was not the history of Arthur you chose, but the bare name'.¹¹⁴ To some the poet's choice becomes meaningful when his work is seen as a celebration of his Queen in terms of the Tudor myth, according to which Elizabeth descends from Arthur. And, to be sure, Spenser protests that 'thy name O souveraine Queene, thy realme and race, / From this renowned Prince derived arre' (II.x.4). But when it comes to the crunch, he traces her back to Britomart and Artegall instead (III.iii.26-49). His own explanation is that he chose Arthur 'as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former workes, and also furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time' (L15-18). However, such considerations are not specific enough to rule out any hero other than Arthur, while they account in no way for the total lack of correspondence between Spenser's Arthur and the figure familiar from the medieval chronicles and romances. But then, in saying that he chose the history of king Arthur Spenser cannot possibly mean that he is going to retell that story, for he announces that his own story concerns Arthur 'before he was king' (L28-29). He means that the history of king Arthur symbolizes moral perfection so well that he has decided to call its personification Arthur. As an allegorist he leaves it to his readers to discover the symbolic relation. He can do so confidently because the major features of king Arthur's story are well known, 'being made famous by many mens former workes'.

One of these features is the expectation that Arthur, though he died, will return to resume his reign over Britain: quondam rexque futurus. This fits Spenser's Arthur to a nicety in that he stands

¹¹⁴ Images, p.137; and compare John Hughes in Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.94. Murrin offers an unsatisfactory but thought-provoking explanation in 'The Rhetoric of Fairyland', in The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry: From Wyatt to Milton, edited by Thomas O. Sloan and Raymond B. Waddington (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974), pp.73-95 (especially pp.91-95).

for virtue as dedication to Time unto death, to be rewarded with the reign of Eternity. But the features Lewis mentions apply too. As for Uther, he is best remembered for begetting Arthur out of wedlock on 'the lady Igrayne' (L49) when Merlin's magic has transformed him into the likeness of her husband Gorlois. Virtue, similarly, springs from God's supernatural identification with Man in Christ. Uther's title, Pendragon, means 'head of an army' - from dragon as the standard of a cohort.¹¹⁵ It makes him a Lord of Hosts, or God, symbolically. Like Father, like Son. In christian theology the latter reveals the former.¹¹⁶ So in Spenser Arthur appears as dragon-head literally:

His haughtie helmet, horrid all with gold,
Both glorious brightnesse, and great terrour bred;
For all the crest a Dragon did enfold. (I.vii.31)

This is the ancient serpent, Satan, already conquered in Christ though still dreadful for the Time being, like the Dragon defeated by Red Cross (I.xii.9-11). As for Mordred, Guinevere, Launcelot and the Saxons, these names conjure up the tale of treachery at the very heart of Arthur's court while he is fighting his wars abroad, to result in his downfall. Virtue is similarly betrayed as such by Time, the condition of mortality. In spite of his supernatural armour Spenser's Arthur dies (I.vii.36). Furthermore, in the medieval tradition given currency by Geoffrey of Monmouth Arthur and the Britons ultimately hail from Troy. The most notable city of Spenser's Britain is Troynovant, New Troy. This must be Arthur's capital, for it 'is' London in the same sense in which Mercilla and Duessa 'are' Elizabeth and Mary.¹¹⁷ But how could it be 'built of old Troyes ashes cold' (III.ix.38)? Certainly not literally. It symbolizes virtue, constructed out of mortified flesh, thus complementing Arthur as Cleopolis does Gloriana. In fact, it is the visible aspect of Cleopolis. Redeemed Man, whose coronation is still to come and whose accession 'ad nos vix tenuis famae perlabitur aura',¹¹⁸ if not communicated by the Muses (VI Proem 2-3), is at least manifestly crown prince (see also I.ix.5).

¹¹⁵ OED s.v. Pendragon¹.

¹¹⁶ e.g. John 14.9.

¹¹⁷ II.x.46; III.ix.45; IV.xi.28. And see p.38 above.

¹¹⁸ Aeneid VII.646.

This link between Arthur and Troynovant can be detected also in his implicit association with Hector, the mainstay of falling Troy, and Aeneas, the epitome of Rome, a New Troy, in statu nascendi. Infolded the classical heroes would symbolize virtue as life out of death. But they do so in their own right too, as Spenser merges them with their foremost enemies. A poem beginning 'Lo I the man' advertizes itself as a British Aeneid. One might expect its central character to be another Aeneas. And so it proves. Arthur's helmet, with its plume and its dragon that 'seem'd to throw / From flaming mouth bright sparkles fierie red' (I.vii.31-32), recalls the 'terribilem cristis galeam flammisque vomentem', part of the new armour Venus presents to her son. It is forged, under Vulcan's supervision, by 'Aetnaei Cyclopes' in 'antra Aetnaea'. Arthur's sword had been 'in flames of Aetna wrought apart' by Merlin, as we learn in due course (II.viii.20). However, helmet and sword recall with equal force those of Aeneas's irreconcilable antagonist Turnus, who almost succeeds in bringing down the Trojans' Latin settlement and is not slain until the very end of the epic. His 'triplici crinita iuba galea alta Chimaeram / sustinet, Aetnaeos efflantem faucibus ignis': a dragon-like monster. And his sword 'ignipotens deus ipse ... / fecerat et Stygia candentem tinxerat unda', just as Arthur's sword had been 'dipped in the bitter wave / Of hellish Styx' by Merlin. The British hero contains polar opposites. He stands for virtue as its own enemy, victorious in extremis.¹¹⁹

Since Turnus in Virgil is 'alius Achilles',¹²⁰ one suspects that Arthur could be both another Achilles and another Hector. And again so it proves. The 'glorious brightnesse' of his helmet makes him κορυθαίολος, an epithet peculiar to Hector (apart from Iliad XX.38). 'Upon the top of all his loftie crest, / A bunch of haires ... Did shake' (I.vii.32), as on Hector's helmet: one remembers how it frightens the little Astyanax, to the amusement of his parents - a touching moment of relief and renewal of motivation amidst the pressures and horrors of war.¹²¹ The helmet of St Paul's miles

¹¹⁹ Aeneid VIII.620, 440, 419 // VII.785-86; XII.90-91 (and see Variorum I, 251-52; II, 274).

¹²⁰ Aeneid VI.89, and compare IX.742.

¹²¹ Iliad VI.466-71.

christianus is 'salvation' or, more particularly, 'the hope of salvation'.¹²² No wonder Arthur's plume 'seem'd to daunce for jollity'. However, Spenser qualifies this note, too un-Homeric to be true. The plume also resembles 'an Almond tree', the white hair of old age,¹²³ symbolizing Time as it undermines life. And of course, where Aeneas kills Turnus, Hector is killed by Achilles. Virtue's victory in extremis involves its defeat as virtue. Arthur's armour pointedly suggests Achilles. It is the Greek's crest that has hairs waving in a dance-like movement (περιβελόντο). When he draws near to Hector, the bronze protecting his body flashes 'like the gleam ... of the sun as he riseth', just as Arthur's 'glitterand armour' shines like 'Phoebus brightest ray' (29). And the precious stone on Arthur's baldric, sparkling 'like Hesperus amongst the lesser lights' (30), recalls Achilles' fatal spear, scintillating 'as a star goeth forth amid stars in the darkness of night, the star of evening, that is set in heaven as the fairest of all'.¹²⁴ But then, does Hector triumph in his downfall at all? Like virtue, he does proleptically: he wears Achilles' old armour in token of his defeat of Patroclos, Achilles' alter ego. So does Arthur. His baldric shining 'like twinkling stars' (29) reminds one of Achilles' 'corselet ... spangled with stars (ἀστέρωντα)' which Patroclos puts on. And he does not carry his own spear (37), just as Patroclos must do without that of his friend. Moreover, Spenser as it were turns Homer's tragic irony inside out. In making Arthur more intensely sun-like he identifies him with Apollo, who will slay Achilles, as the dying Hector anticipates.¹²⁵ The transference of the 'Hesperus' simile has the same implication: carried by Timias the fatal spear becomes precious (τίμιος), a jewel, 'shapt like a Ladies head' (30) - an intimation, surely, of Gloriana. 'O death, where is thy sting!', indeed.¹²⁶

¹²² Ephesians 6.17; I Thessalonians 5.8.

¹²³ Ecclesiastes 12.5 and marginal gloss.

¹²⁴ Iliad XXII.315-16, 134-35, 317-18. I owe these observations to M.P.Leslie, 'Martial and Chivalric Symbolism in Spenser's The Faerie Queene' (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1981), Chapter Two (II.i).

¹²⁵ Iliad XVI.133-34, 140-44 // XXII.359-60.

¹²⁶ I Corinthians 15.55.

With Arthur's gem shining like the evening star, its visual effect must be negligible in the light of his sun-like armour. The comparison verges on the bathetic, though, even if we shut our eyes to its context. Hesperus may outshine the other stars. But it hardly shines amongst them, since it soon gives way, disappearing altogether. The implication does not matter in Homer, where the simile conveys not the spear's superiority but 'nightfall' for Troy. It does in Spenser, where the point is the stone's unrivalled splendour. Incongruities such as these are not to be passed by or denounced, depending on one's critical standards: they are to be interpreted. The passage as it were 'phases' the response to this admonition of St Paul's: 'The night is past, & the day is at hand: let us therefore cast away the workes of darkenes, and let us put on the armour of light'.¹²⁷ In Arthur we see Man thus armed reaching his zenith of glory. Yet this glory is even so but a bright star that ushers in the night of Time, whose darkness admits only a baldrick of 'lesser lights', glory unfolded into its several aspects. Spenser's literal nonsense makes allegorical sense - here with all-encompassing implications. For this description of Arthur sums up the entire poem as a zodiac of virtues; as an evening star of glory, blinding light accommodated to human eyes as comparative excellence when wholly obscured; and as 'the Sunne of righteousness',¹²⁸ blazing the night sky into invisibility even while still conditioned by it in its temporal revolutions.

If Arthur rotates through The Faerie Queene, his story must be illusory. Level-headed examination of its 'stages' will confirm this. It might seem that his search for Gloriana has been triggered off by the dream in which she reveals herself to him. However, this experience cannot be merely a dream, in view of the 'pressed gras where she had lyen' (I.ix.15). To Lewis it seems one 'to which the contrast ... between dream and waking does not strictly apply', namely 'the soul's new-kindled raptures at its first meeting with a transcendental or at least incorporeal object of love'.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Romans 13.12.

¹²⁸ Malachi 4.2.

¹²⁹ 'Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser', a review of Robert Ellrodt's book of the same title (Geneva, 1960), in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, collected by Walter Hooper (Cambridge, 1966), pp.149-63 (p.159).

This is precisely wrong, because Arthur definitely dreams and just as definitely wakes up. Nor does he then ask himself,

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music: - Do I wake or sleep?¹³⁰

Now an experience at once dreamt and real can hardly be an experience. A further illogicality settles the matter. Gloriana's love for Arthur was to appear only 'when just time expired'. Yet Spenser hints unmistakably that they make love. She lies down 'by [his] side', exposing 'her daintie limbes', and makes 'most goodly glee and lovely blandishment', as only a woman inviting sex to seal her commitment would (13-14). What does she withhold, giving herself? 'Just time' refers not to a certain period of time but to Time justified in Christ, or what the New Testament calls 'the fulness of time',¹³¹ to be revealed when Time 'expires', ceases to be. Until then God's already unbounded love for Man manifests itself as reticent Arthur rather than as apparent Gloriana; as nocturnal visitation rather than as daylight vision. Qua Venus Gloriana remains an 'evening star'. The heavy imprints of the ethereal Faery Queen on the grass and on Arthur's memory are not evidence of some transcendental event but complementary metaphors for glory's hidden appearance in Time. So the dream, being an allegory, cannot give rise to the search. Their relationship must be of a different kind. Fowler takes deep soundings when he says that Arthur's 'waking experience extends his dream, as he pursues in life the ego-ideal he dreamt. To change the figure, he goes on to enact the epic Gloriana recited to him in his vision'.¹³² But such figurative language confuses more than it clarifies. The narrative needs to be sacrificed unambiguously.

Arthur's search itself soon betrays its allegorical status. We have already noted in passing that Spenser does not really describe it. Apart from the dream and the pursuit of Florimell Arthur's story consists of martial exploits, usually in support of the titular heroes. Of his search proper we never see anything

¹³⁰ Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', ll.79-80.

¹³¹ Galatians 4.4; Ephesians 1.10; also Mark 1.15 and I Peter 1.20.

¹³² 'Emanations', p.74.

more than that he resumes it, to disappear from the fiction (except in Book IV).¹³³ This is easily explained: since his knightly feats symbolize noonday virtue, they must be qualified by a crepuscular view. That is all. They cannot be events taking place during a search. So considered they could only be so many interruptions impeding its progress. Yet the poem never hints that Arthur feels annoyed at being side-tracked all the time because he is preoccupied with Gloriana instead. On the contrary, he eagerly embraces every opportunity to show his mettle. At one point he even turns up positively 'seeking adventures', as though he had forgotten about his love (IV.vii.42). It is only literally absurd that he sets out, with the specific purpose of finding Gloriana, 'thoroughly instructed' by Timon (L52), his tutor in military skills, who counsels against love (I.ix.9). Exploits and search are not phases in a career but aspects of an extended metaphor. Even time references do not imply sequence. In Book I Arthur has been seeking for 'nine monethes' (ix.15), the period of gestation, aptly symbolic of magnificence in Time about to be delivered as glory in Eternity.¹³⁴ In Book II we hear of a twelve months' search (ix.7 and 38), as though three months had elapsed since the meeting with Red Cross. However, in the 1590 edition these stanzas mention seven and three years, contradicting each other¹³⁵ - one more pretended slip to give away the story. For the silent 'correction' of 1596 could hardly betoken a complete transformation of the fictional mode.

Some critics hold that the projected Twelve-Book Faerie Queene was to have culminated in the wedding of Arthur and Gloriana.¹³⁶ This assumption, if true, would destroy our thesis. And it is undoubtedly compelling: an Arthur perpetually frustrated would be

¹³³ I.ix.20; III.v.12; IV.ix.17; V.xi.35; VI.viii.30.

¹³⁴ Compare Romans 8.22 and Mark 13.8.

¹³⁵ Poetical Works, Critical Appendix, p.648.

¹³⁶ Dryden, and Hurd (implicitly), Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.74, 118; Upton, Prince of Poets, ed. Elliott, p.199. Modern readers, taught not to speculate about the unwritten, usually do not commit themselves - but see Donald Cheney, Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in 'The Faerie Queene', Yale Studies in English, 161 (New Haven and London, 1966), p.174, 192; Hankins, Source and Meaning, p.52; Roche hesitates significantly, Kindly Flame, p.50.

too demoralizing to be credible. Still, it is entirely groundless. The Letter to Raleigh, which does contain information about Book XII, does not even hint at a marriage. Nor does Arthur get appreciably closer to Gloriana as the narrative progresses. Already in Book II he has 'walkt round about the world', like the sun, 'yet no where can her find'; and Prays-desire rubs it in (ix.7, 38). More conclusively, perhaps, the Proem to Book I, summarizing the action of the poem as a whole, speaks of

fairest Tanaquill,
Whom that most noble Briton Prince so long
Sought through the world, and suffered so much ill,
That I must rue his undeserved wrong. (2)

Not a whisper of a happy ending here! Besides, The Faerie Queene models itself on the Aeneid. Both are about New Troy a-building. Arthur's helmet and sword make him another Aeneas. Gloriana, central yet elusive, proves another Lavinia. Virgil keeps her inconspicuous but introduces her at the very heart of his epic, reporting how, during a ceremony at the altar, her hair had caught fire - an omen whose interpretation epitomizes Gloriana's role:

namque fore inlustrem fama fatisque canebant
ipsam, sed populo magnum portendere bellum.¹³⁷

The flames of the holy ritual, a counterpart to the biblical fire of heaven, burning yet not consuming,¹³⁸ surround her head like a 'glory'. Now the Latin poet as it were truncates his work, in that he stops short at the death of Turnus and fails to narrate the union of Aeneas and Lavinia which it makes possible. Spenser must follow suit. (This argument would not have seemed tendentious to Renaissance readers, familiar with 'the so-called Thirteenth book, a supplement describing the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia and Aeneas's apotheosis, written by the Italian humanist, Maphaeus Vegius' and often published with Virgil's text.¹³⁹) However, like Virgil Spenser does imply a marriage (and, indeed, an apotheosis): not as events beyond his narrative scope, though. After all, Gloriana is

¹³⁷ Aeneid VII.71-80 (79-80).

¹³⁸ Exodus 3.2; Acts 2.3.

¹³⁹ Priscilla Bawcutt, Gavin Douglas: A Critical Study (Edinburgh, 1976), p.104. Vegio's dates are 1407-1458.



quintessentially a virgin. She presides over an Order of Maidenhead. Also, she could not sacrifice her virginity for the joys of sex without ceasing to 'shadow' Elizabeth. Arthur's consummated dream has obviously left her intact. (Her unabashed advances merely confirm that she does not shadow the Queen in virtue of her narrative role.¹⁴⁰) Arthur's exploits are the fulfilment of his love, tacitly, beyond the horizon, like his dream as he tells it: magnificence is glory 'already-not yet'.

Arthur has no story. The story he appears to have does focus what he stands for all the time, all-round virtue, as 'e-ducation'.¹⁴¹ But it is not the story of an education. Spenser knows that moral growth does not mean acquiring the virtues in a row. He never relates Arthur's performance in any one Book to what he might be supposed to have learnt previously. Indeed, Arthur manifestly does not learn at all: he is master throughout. Nor does he set the reader examples in all the virtues seriatim - what a repellent, unedifying monster he would be if he did. Whatever the rationale of the Books' sequence, it is not temporal.¹⁴² We are well rid of Arthur's story. Not only his invariable readiness to assist his peers but also his unquestioning pursuit of his mistress is too mechanical to appeal as narrative. He seems immune to the passing of time. Never does he wonder uneasily whether Gloriana might not be a 'deceiving elf', tempting him out into 'faery lands forlorn'.¹⁴³ Even his ignorance of the way leaves him unperturbed. His zest does not evidently increase when he hears others reminiscing about Faery Court. And he certainly does not press them to guide him thither, in compensation for his efforts on their behalf. Let us

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth did visit her subjects sexually in dreams, witness Simon Forman (A.L.Rowse, The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society (London, 1971; rpt. 1974), pp.170-71). But they would not have dreamt of publishing the fact, least of all in works dedicated to her. The public cult of the Queen was either pseudo-erotic ('the marriage of Elizabeth and England') or, when apparently erotic, decidedly Petrarchan (see Frances A.Yates, 'The Triumph of Chastity', in Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1975; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1977), pp.112-20, 215-16).

¹⁴¹ p.43 above.

¹⁴² Compare Nelson, Poetry, pp.121-23, on Spenser's use of 'fashion'.

¹⁴³ Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', l.74, 70.

be honest and refrain from disingenuous or heady theorizing to save the tale at all costs. For instance, let us not turn Arthur into a 'daemonic agent'.¹⁴⁴ Fletcher's lurid conception of allegory may apply to, say, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', that is, to the 'immanent' symbolism that Coleridge so perceptively distinguishes from allegory proper.¹⁴⁵ Arthur acts compulsively because he is a personification tethered to a concept.

If Arthur has no story, Spenser's work, qua Arthuriad, cannot be an epic. The poet would have smiled assent, had he been able to hear C.S.Lewis assailing his Letter: 'Or take your invoking the precedents of Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. This implies that The Faerie Queene is an epic. But it isn't. An epic represents some great event that made a change in the world historically, whereas your poem, while it is full of events of a kind, is in another sense motionless'.¹⁴⁶ The poet would have agreed. But then, he does not imply that his work is an epic as Lewis defines it. This definition hardly fits Ariosto (let alone Xenophon), whom Spenser mentions among his models, as Lewis conveniently forgets. Moreover, it is virtually irrelevant to all his models as interpreted by him (in the Letter), and, for that matter, by Renaissance humanists generally.¹⁴⁷ Nor does he ever use the word 'epic'. Instead he speaks of 'Poets historicall', that is, makers of fiction (L19, 76, and compare 12-13). Spenser would also have agreed that, qua series of Legends, his poem is 'static and repetitive', lacking the 'dynamic and developing structure' of epic.¹⁴⁸ That he 'thrusteth into the midst' (L78-79) can be taken with a pinch of salt, as we have seen. And as the next section will show, his promise that Book XII was to have provided a flashback to the

¹⁴⁴ Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, New York, 1964), pp.25-69.

¹⁴⁵ The Statesman's Manual, December 1816; reprinted in Imagination in Coleridge, edited by John Spencer Hill (London and Basingstoke, 1978), pp.151-52.

¹⁴⁶ Images, p.137.

¹⁴⁷ e.g. Gavin Douglas, Eneados, I Prologue, 11.325-32 (see Bawcutt, Douglas, p.84). Compare Nohrnberg, Analogy, pp.22-34.

¹⁴⁸ Owen, "'In These XII Books ...'", p.167.

Faery Queen's annual feast (183-84) is similarly a matter of keeping up epic appearances. We should certainly continue to refer to The Faerie Queene as an epic - but only because that generic term adequately suggests both the importance to which it aspires and most, though not all, of its relevant analogues, as 'romance' does not.

VI The Titular Knights and the Annual Feast

Since Arthur has no story, the adventures of the titular knights, with which his intersect, cannot be stories either. However, on its own this inference, though logically incontrovertible, does not persuade, because in the knights' case the illusion of narrative is undeniably stronger. Spenser requires more than the mere knowledge that to yield to the tide of appearances is to perish: unless it becomes the certainty of an active faith, we would still be swept away. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.¹⁴⁹

One truly explosive argument is that the knights' quests are pageants as well: an impossibility. Schulze suggested long ago that 'Spenser's use of the Faerie Queene's annual twelve days' feast to motivate the action of his great poem ... may well be a reflection of certain chivalric practices of the [Elizabethan] age rather than a mere reversion to the feast of the romances'.¹⁵⁰ Taking up this point Frances Yates has urged the need for research into the connection between The Faerie Queene and Elizabeth's Accession Day Tilts in particular.¹⁵¹ It seems safe to say that the poem was thoroughly modern in its very neo-medievalism, rather than 'already a little out of date when it first appeared'.¹⁵² Now the idea that the knights' adventures are pageants staged in honour of Gloriana has considerable explanatory power. Thus the fact that she does not figure in them except, retrospectively, as their initiator could

¹⁴⁹ See Philippians 2.12 (AV V, 439; the Geneva Bible shuns 'work', presumably to forestall popish misconstructions).

¹⁵⁰ 'Elizabethan Chivalry and the Faerie Queene's Annual Feast', MLN, 50 (1935), 158-61 (p.158).

¹⁵¹ 'Elizabethan Chivalry: The Romance of the Accession Day Tilts', JWCI, 20 (1957), 4-25.

¹⁵² Lewis, Allegory of Love, p.359.

mean that they are a spectacle to her, as courtiers' tournaments were to Elizabeth, after she had authorized her champions formally at the outset. If so, it becomes clear why the knights never guide Arthur to Gloriana: the world of pageantry in which he enacts an imaginary search is discontinuous with the real world from which she watches. Also, Red Cross once refers to Guyon's adventure as a pageant (II.i.33). Moreover, E.K., in his commentary on 'June' in The Shepheardes Calender, slightly misquotes II.iii.25(1) from what he calls the poet's 'Pageaunts'. Many of the exploits that could not conceivably happen, such as killing Error, could well be staged. Besides, the adventures are obviously not strung together by chance, notwithstanding the plentiful references to it. They are bound to come full circle. One feels that there is no possibility of any knight, even Calidore, abandoning his task, or dying by accident. There is a scenario. Quite a few episodes are, in fact, unmistakably pageants or organized performances of some other type, such as the procession of the Seven Deadly Sins (I.iv), the masque of Cupid (III.xii), and the wedding of Thames and Medway (IV.xi). These would fit much more comfortably into large-scale pageants than into genuine adventures.

As pageants the knights' adventures would constitute the Faery Queen's feast rather than merely find their origins there. The Letter, so far from forcing us to distinguish the feast proper from the adventures, implicitly encourages us to equate them. For as Historiographer Spenser is conspicuously silent about what else the feast could be. The most natural assumption, a banquet,¹⁵³ is subtly ruled out by the poem. The two major 'feasts' embedded in The Faerie Queene, Satyrane's (IV.ii.26, v.6) and Marinell's (V.iii.2, 3), are tournaments. Only the latter includes banquets, which Spenser leaves rather emphatically undescribed, just as on the occasion of the minor 'feast' to celebrate Red Cross's victory, which is a banquet, he had exclaimed: 'What needs of daintie dishes to devize'. One gathers that his 'narrow leaves' (sic - I.xii.14) will not accommodate any descriptions of festive meals. And then,

¹⁵³ Bennett, Evolution, p.28.

the departure of twelve paragons of knighthood one after the other hardly fits the idea of a feast in the first place: you do not celebrate by leaving the party. True, the poet's statement that 'the occasions of the xii. severall adventures' happen at the feast (L85) would normally imply that the adventures themselves do not. But the inference is not logically necessary. The equation has, in fact, everthing to recommend it. For one thing, without it one could not begin to counter the damaging complaint that 'an account of the feast at any length (and the attention given to the matter in the letter suggests that the account when it does appear will be more than trivial), placed in [Book XII] ... would inevitably break the back of [that] book ... and thus destroy the symmetry of the scheme'.¹⁵⁴ Spenser says that in Book XII 'I devise that the Faery Queene kept her Annuall feaste' (L83-84) - not 'tell how'. It was to have revealed, or rather hinted obscurely¹⁵⁵ and no doubt briefly, that the entire Faerie Queene, of a size indeed far from trivial, is that feast. Only a revelation of such scope would need to be anticipated in an introductory Letter. For another thing, the equation enables us to solve the awkward discrepancy between the time schemes of the Letter and the poem. How can the adventures begin on consecutive days, as the Letter surely implies (L84, 88, 115, 121),¹⁵⁶ if in the poem, which has the knights handing over to each other at their completion, they take months? They can only if they are pageants, whose performance takes a day each while the action represented in them is imagined to take months. Also, Arthur, as the recurring figure in a set of pageants at Faery Court, would be the centre of magnificence in the sense of splendid court entertainment.¹⁵⁷ One infers that Spenser's 'magnificences' are the wedding celebration of Arthur and Gloriana - and, qua poetry, their epithalamion.

¹⁵⁴ Owen, "'In These XII Books ... '", p.167.

¹⁵⁵ Compare 'clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall devises' (L37).

¹⁵⁶ pace Arthur Colby Sprague, 'Gloriana's Annual Feast', TLS, 27 April 1933, p.295.

¹⁵⁷ OED s.v. Magnificence 4b.

To show that the knights' adventures are pageants is not to show that they are pseudo-stories. On the contrary, it is to rehabilitate them as real stories, telling what happens at an imaginary feast. But then, there are formidable arguments militating against their status as pageants. Nothing suggests that the knights are actors. They are not masquing, going through the motions of a prescribed ritual, but vitally challenged, opposing their enemies and pursuing their aspirations with the intensity and commitment that go with inescapable exposure to the human predicament. They cannot opt out of their roles. Besides, though the frame of the pageantry world fictionalizes Arthur's distinctly erotic designs upon Gloriana, they are even so hardly suitable for a public show put up specially for her. Anyway, there is no evidence of her presence all along as a spectator. The possibility that Spenser would have revealed it at the very end of the poem cannot be seriously entertained: such a gesture would unmask the knights after all and thus quite gratuitously annihilate the poem's moral urgency so carefully maintained throughout. In short, the knights' adventures are as truly genuine quests as they are pageants. Hence they cannot possibly be real stories. They are indeed insubstantial pageants. 'Quest', 'pageant' and 'feast' do not really specify narrative: they bracket symbolically, as 'Allegoricall devises', long chains of metaphors. Virtue is apparently 'glory not yet', and thus 'quest'; secretly it is 'glory already', and thus 'pageantry' at elusive Cleopolis. Because it is both, Gloriana's feast takes place annually, year in year out, perennially, as long as Time lasts - like the sun's journey through the zodiac. Only when Time expires will it be concluded by a banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb,¹⁵⁸ which lies beyond Spenser's thematic range.

Let me add a rider. As we have seen, Gloriana shadows Elizabeth not in that they have kingship and virginity in common but in that as queen and virgin Elizabeth is the symbol Gloriana embodied in history.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Gloriana shadows Elizabeth not in that

¹⁵⁸ Revelation 19.7, 9.

¹⁵⁹ pp.38-39.

they are both pivots of pageantry but in that Elizabeth's recurrent Accession Day Tilts, as it were Time's unfolding of her motto semper eadem,¹⁶⁰ embody historically Gloriana's symbolic feast of Man's as yet inapparent accession to the kingdom of God. Therefore, in case historical research should be able to identify particular Elizabethan entertainments as actual sources for Spenser's pageants, the latter must on no account be taken to mean the former.

Our next argument to show that the titular knights do not have stories must begin with the recognition that the appearance that they do derives from the idea, reinforced notably by the Letter, that they have a single task each, and by its accomplishment in between a departure from and a return to Faery Court. This mould, so far from being obviously exploded by the sheer incoherence of the narratives, seems rather to regiment them sequentially in spite of it. Yet this same mould also hints that the knights rotate, like Arthur, especially because their returns are invariably anti-climactic. Red Cross must go back to undertake new tasks (I.xii.18), and so forsake the bliss of Una unveiled. Guyon finds himself haring after the Gloriana-like Florimell. Artegall is summoned back prematurely (V.xii.27), to be reviled by Envy and Detraction. And Calidore's triumph over the Blattant Beast culminates in its escape, to play havoc with The Faerie Queene itself (VI.xii.38, 41). In short, Gloriana's court appears in a distinctly inglorious light. Now this contradicts both Guyon's and Red Cross's rapturous reminiscences of their Queen and Cleopolis, discussed earlier on,¹⁶¹ and Arthur's expectation, implied by his unremitting search, of undiluted felicity and utter fulfilment. To attempt a synthesis of these two valuations would be futile: in their stark contrast they rule each other out. Faery Court is not a place but an allegory, of glory 'already-not yet'. Hence it cannot be left and revisited. 'Departure' and 'return' are symbols, conveying the hidden authenticity of glory in Time: the knights belong where they cannot apparently be. Like Arthur,

¹⁶⁰ O'Connell, Mirror and Veil, p.191; Robin Headlam Wells, 'Semper Eadem: Spenser's "Legend of Constancie"', MLR, 73 (1978), 250-55.

¹⁶¹ p.24, 40.

they shine as virtue, to be dimmed as glory. If Red Cross's attitude is not untypical (188-92, 102-105), they 'abandon' Gloriana as eagerly as Arthur 'interrupts' his search for her. They find themselves, their τέλος, Arthur, in the midst of their struggles. The incoherence of their stories comes into its own, after all.

However, as in Arthur's case, so here we must not dismantle the narrative without marking the symbolic significance of the illusion. Thus the dreamlike progress of the quests, which so impresses Hough, need not be ignored, since it aligns them with Arthur's vision, as complementary metaphors. As long as we do not propose to psycho-analyse Spenser. Again, both Arthur and the knights appear to move from Gloriana to Gloriana, yet in contrary directions because with distinctive preoccupations. Fowler, taking the knights as subcharacters of Arthur but honouring the opposed orientations at the expense of the common track, glibly imposes a neo-Platonic choresis, associating their missions with emanatio, their quests with conversio, and his search with remeatio.¹⁶² But Spenser's God does more than emanate: He is in Christ Emmanuel, with us. The poem's narrative scheme makes a different point. Arthur's centripetal e-ducation hardly gathers in the knights' centrifugal in-ducements to their tasks. On the contrary, they swamp it. Virtue, glory unfolded for everybody to see, is per se a vicious circle. At the start of Book VI the poet subtly warns us that its Legend, and by implication all the other Legends of Faery Court, 'of [which] it seemes, men Courtesie doe call' (i.1), are

nought but forgerie,
Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas,
Which see not perfect things but in a glas (Proem 5)

- that is, of transient creatures, who see perfection in mortality, in reverse. We are not to be deceived by 'that glasse so gay' but to remind ourselves that 'we all beholde as in a mirrour the glorie of the Lord with open face, and we are changed into the same image, from glorie to glorie, as by the Spirit of the Lord'.¹⁶³ The entire poem constitutes a call 'to virtue'. Yet as such it is but the visible countercurrent, unto death, of its secret Pauline sweep, 'from glory to glory', unto life everlasting.

¹⁶² 'Emanations', pp.74-75.

¹⁶³ II Corinthians 3.18.

For the final stage in our attempt to demythologize the knights' quests let us recall our propositio, namely that the Letter's narrative component should not be taken as plot summary.¹⁶⁴ Could it be that its awkwardness and inaccuracy as such, so far from disqualifying it, are explosive clues? As we have noted, the account of the adventures' origins seems superfluous. As far as Red Cross is concerned, though, it might be a genuine prelude dove-tailing into the narrative of Book I, since there are no positive discrepancies (I.87-114). However, as Bennett acutely observes, qua prelude it 'belongs at the beginning of the narrative. Its chief function, that of creating suspense as to the knight's ability, is destroyed if the story is not told until after the knight has proved his worth. Either Spenser's plan to put this part of his story at the end of the poem was a serious error in narrative technique or the introductory scene was an afterthought'.¹⁶⁵ It is both and neither: it serves as an allegorical definition of the Book's theme, devised specifically for the Letter and, as the absurdity of its alleged placement implies, not meant for inclusion in the poem at all. The same goes for the origins of the other knights' adventures. Owen remarks that 'there appears to be no precedent either in practice or in theory for placing the preliminaries to an epic action in the last book'.¹⁶⁶ The prescriptive force of generic properties, to humanists, entails that Spenser cannot have envisaged such an unprecedented move. Anyway, the poem, which mentions the quests' festive origin only in connection with Guyon, belies the feast Book XII was supposedly to have narrated by making it a one day rather than a twelve day event (II.ii.42).¹⁶⁷ We can dispose for good of Owen's complaint about the final Book ruining the poem's pattern. Spenser's promise of a flashback certainly appears to presuppose narrative. In actual fact

¹⁶⁴ p.10.

¹⁶⁵ Evolution, p.31.

¹⁶⁶ "'In These XII Books ... '", p.166.

¹⁶⁷ See Sprague, 'Annual Feast'. George B. Parks, in his rejoinder ('Gloriana's Annual Feast', TLS, 29 June 1933, p.447), rightly rejects Sprague's contention that Spenser means twelve New Year Day feasts.

it inflates an illusion to bursting point. Glory's elusiveness in Time precludes anything beyond the merest allusion to Gloriana's feast. Incidentally, this must apply to the Letter too, if it is to be a valid complement. That is why, as Historiographer, the poet does not say in so many words that the adventures are festive pageants. Their origins, which he does describe at some length, are of course part of the feast. But then, they are complaints (L98, 116, 122), appropriately clouding the glory of Faeryland, as they can on their own. Since they nevertheless ought to yield their glorious implications, they are told in a mere postscript in 1590, withdrawn in 1596. The Letter's glory, or 'great light', too, shines and disappears like the evening star.

Only once in his historiographical account does Spenser slip out of his assumed role, to gloss the armour Una gives to Red Cross as 'the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes.' (L107).¹⁶⁸ This is enough to prove his fiction metaphorical and to clinch the definition of its tenor, in case 'glory' and 'magnificence' should still seem indeterminate. For Paul did not distribute weaponry among his congregations: he told them, figuratively, to 'be strong in the Lord', that is, to resist the devil in the knowledge that in Christ he has already been defeated. Also, the biblical reference could not be a short-cut to avoid a full inventory because Red Cross is hardly equipped with all the items in Paul's list. Thus while the prominence of shields in his encounters with the Sans brothers does invite examination in light of the 'shield of faith', one would be hard put to it to decide whether his feet are 'shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace'. Instead the reference makes Red Cross, and 'by implication' the other knights, symbols of moral perfection. It also makes him a symbol of holiness in particular, in two ways. Firstly, the passage in Ephesians itself presents Man as it were as consecrated earth, set apart from and to be defended against spiritual evil (see verse 12). Spenser can cite it to suggest holiness as virtue because it emphasizes the active aspect. This point becomes clear through a comparison with the essentially synonymous but passive metaphors of warfare in Luther's

¹⁶⁸ i.e. Ephesians 6.10-17.

best known hymn, prompted by Psalm 46: 'Ein feste burg ist unser Gott / ein gute wehr und waffen ... Mit unser macht ist nichts gethan / wir sind gar bald verloren / Es streit fur unns der rechte man / den Gott hat selbs erkoren'.¹⁶⁹ However, holiness, as a 'whole armour' (πανοπλία), given by Una, also focusses virtue as complete identification of God and Man. Hence this aspect of magnificence must be transparently glory 'already-not yet'. And indeed, of all the knights it is Red Cross who knows from experience of Panthea, the Faery Queen's bright, if brittle, tower of strength, and who glimpses the New Jerusalem, while it is in the Legend of Holiness that Arthur alludes unmistakably to Gloriana's embraces. Secondly, therefore, the Letter's pseudo-prelude to Red Cross's quest symbolizes holiness in that Spenser gives away his biblical tenor there rather than anywhere else.

In his Wonderful Prophecies from the Beginning of the Monarchy of this Land (1626) Robert Salter, a friend of Spenser's, claims that his dissertation on the 'fourfold state of the man in Christ' has been anticipated in the poet's first Legend.¹⁷⁰ Nelson dismisses this as the earliest attempt to read the Book as a Bildungsroman, depicting four successive phases of development.¹⁷¹ This is understandable, in view of Salter's use of 'period'. Yet the sheer inapplicability of the sequence should have checked him. Moreover, how could a 'fourfold state' develop temporally? In fact, the fourth state, 'the glory of the man's consummation ... although he do yet walk in the flesh' explicitly involves the first, 'the state of nature, originally derived unto him from his parents'. In Time Man could not be educated out of nature. Nor could he mature out of the second 'state of his adoption and childhood in Christ through Grace' into the third, 'his full growth and strength of manhood in Christ', in spite of what the conjunction of metaphors suggests. And then, Salter does not even try to quadrisect Red Cross's quest. He

¹⁶⁹ Martin Luthers Geistliche Lieder, edited by Albert Leitzmann, Kleine Texte für theologische Vorlesungen und Übungen, series editor Hans Lietzmann, 24/25 (Bonn, 1907), p.18.

¹⁷⁰ Alpers quotes from the second edition, of 1627 (Critical Anthology, pp.54-55).

¹⁷¹ Poetry, pp.172-73.

seizes upon its apparent introduction in the Letter, elaborating its details with obvious relish, but then falls into generalities. We might infer that here we have an author indulging in a fond aside and winding up hurriedly. Still, it would not follow that what he denies us are narrative divisions. Perhaps he means that each and every episode symbolizes the fourfold state. If so, he bids fair to be right. Thus in the Error episode we see the first state highlighted in the Wandering Wood, one aspect of silva, ¹⁷² matter, the 'corruption' in which 'the bodie is sown'; ¹⁷³ the second and third in Red Cross's victory, 'first passively' and 'after actively' because it turns out to depend on faith; and the fourth in Una, not yet named but here representing the meaning of her name, inseparability from Christ, as Red Cross's companion through whose counsel they are 'more than conquerors ... [like] Daniel amidst the lions'. ¹⁷⁴ Or consider even just the badge of the patron of holiness, his red cross. Qua 'deare remembrance of his dying Lord' it signifies mortality. It adorns both his shield - of passive faith - and his breast(plate) - of active righteousness, or 'innocencie & godlie life', as the Geneva gloss says (I.i.2). Finally, in the iconographical tradition it marks the banner of the risen Christ. ¹⁷⁵ (Of course, it is also the attribute of Saint George, in Spenser 'consecration of earth' - see I.x.61, 66). The Letter's section on Red Cross embodies the same quadruple meaning. Salter brings out the first state, nature. That the armour is Una's gift conveys the second, passive grace. Spenser's biblical reference introduces the third, active virtue, as we have seen. And the setting, Gloriana's feast, implies the fourth, glory. We may or may not wish to give Salter the benefit of the doubt as to his own ability to read The Faerie Queene: perhaps he stupidly repeats a few general remarks the poet had once tossed off in his presence. How humbling to think that a critical nobody could have set us straight.

¹⁷² Compare Nelson, Poetry, pp.158-59.

¹⁷³ I Corinthians 15.42.

¹⁷⁴ Salter echoes Romans 8.37.

¹⁷⁵ e.g. Tintoretto's 'Resurrection' in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; or Piero della Francesca's, reproduced in Peter and Linda Murray, The Art of the Renaissance (London, 1963; rpt. 1974), p.127, Plate 101.

Turning now to Guyon's adventure, we salute Lewis as he points out the Letter's misrepresentation of its origin (L115-21): 'But in your poem Guyon and the Palmer are well started on their mission against Acrasia before they come across the babe with the bloody hands'.¹⁷⁶ We shall be duly unimpressed, though, for three reasons. To begin with, just as the Letter generally serves to intimate 'the whole intention of the conceit' (L137), so its account of Book II purports to convey 'the whole subject thereof' (L121). Combine this with its apparent inaccuracy, and you will conclude that it is a piece of pseudo-narrative blasting itself out of its hinges. Secondly, Lewis's retort, in denouncing one inaccuracy, introduces another. True, in the poem Guyon and his companion are already travelling together before they find the babe. And they have no doubt come from Faery Court (see II.i.31). But their journey has not been a mission against Acrasia all along. On the contrary, after Red Cross has wished him good speed

Guyon forward gan his voyage make,
With his blacke Palmer, that him guided still.
Still he him guided over dale and hill,
And with his steedie staffe did point his way:
His race with reason, and with words his will,
From foule intemperance he oft did stay,
And suffred not in wrath his hastie steps to stray.

In this faire wize they traveild long yfere,
Through many hard assayes, which did betide;
Of which he honour still away did beare,
And spred his glorie through all countries wide. (34-35)

Like Red Cross after the Error episode he lacks any definite goal.¹⁷⁷ Then, 'at last', he comes upon Ruddymane. The scene and Amavia's story move him so profoundly that he makes a 'sacred vow' there and then to wreak vengeance on Acrasia (60-61). One cannot but infer that his determination to seek her out dates from this moment. If the experience merely rekindles indignation already aroused previously, Spenser would have said so. How incredible it is, too, that Guyon should run into a situation calculated to motivate him anew by accident, 'as chaunst them by a forest side / To passe' (35).

¹⁷⁶ Images, p.138.

¹⁷⁷ See p.32 above.

Finally, Lewis's correction is a half-truth, in that the poem contains, less overtly, an alternative account of Guyon and Ruddymane that does agree with the Letter. His mistake might be an unconscious acknowledgement of this other version. Guyon, reminiscing about Faery Court before Medina, tells how

There this old Palmer shewed himselfe that day,
And to that mighty Princesse did complaine
Of grievous mischiefes, which a wicked Fay
Had wrought, and many whelmd in deadly paine,
Whereof he crav'd redresse. (ii.43)

The Palmer can hardly have been so vague to Gloriana. Nobody would hesitate to equate the unnamed 'wicked Fay' with Acrasia. Should our knowledge of Canto i prevent us from equating the unspecified 'grievous mischiefes' with the fate of Ruddymane's parents, in accordance with the Letter? If Una and Irena have particular causes to plead, the same will probably be true of the Palmer. Moreover, to Medina it must seem that he also carried Ruddymane into Gloriana's presence, again as in the Letter, for Guyon shows her the babe without referring to any distinctly subsequent Mordant episode:

Now hath faire Phoebe with her silver face
Thrise seene the shadowes of the neather world,
Sith last I left that honorable place,
In which her royall presence is intold;
Ne ever shall I rest in house nor hold,
Till I that false Acrasia have wonne;
Of whose fowle deedes, too hideous to be told,
I witnesse am, and this their wretched sonne,
Whose wofull parents she hath wickedly fordonne. (44)

To be sure, Guyon enlarges on 'that dolefull tale'. But Spenser cuts short his verbatim report, stating only that he

told the storie of the mortall payne,
Which Mordant and Amavia did rew;
As with lamenting eyes him selfe did lately vew. (45)

Who shall say whether the last line qualifies 'told' as well as 'rew'? Presumably Medina gets the version of Guyon's story that the reader gets in the Letter. And so, surely, does Arthur (ix.9). The Letter's apparent discrepancy draws attention to a contradiction within Book II, to prove its story illusory. One feels relieved to free Guyon from the need to enact his claim to be in hot pursuit of Acrasia, since all too obviously he is not, literally.

Now for the meaning of the Book's built-in explosive device. Spenser's equivocation in the scene just examined hints that the apparent origin of Guyon's adventure in the Mordant episode is its origin at Faery Court. If so, there are no grounds for locating the rest of his adventure away from Faery Court. More positively, there are good grounds for locating his whole adventure at Faery Court. For one thing, Red Cross openly calls it a pageant (i.33). For another, Guyon's failure to return at the end of the Book could mean that he has never been away. Besides, though his assertion that three months have elapsed 'sith last I left that honorable place' (ii.44) suggests a departure, it also means that all this time he has not left it. It is as though Book II anticipates the 'revelation' in Book XII that all the quests are pageants, all the more so because Guyon, uniquely, refers to the annual feast (ii.42). This anticipation could hardly be more obscure, though. The setting does not light up the adventure: the adventure extinguishes the setting. How perfectly this symbolizes the Legend's theme, temperance, God's grace in so far as it temporizes¹⁷⁸ His curse but by the same token shuts out His eternal radiance. As glory 'already - not yet' Red Cross and Guyon are polar opposites within equivalence, the one being as opaque as the other is transparent.

The opening of Guyon's speech to Medina, 'this the demaund, O Lady, doth revive / Fresh memory in me of that great Queene' and so on (40), prompts certain queries. If he should have been sent on a quest only three months previously, it is strange that his memory needs reviving. It is scarcely less strange that he begins by extolling Gloriana, instead of proceeding at once to an explanation of his mission proper. This incongruity stands out particularly in light of the classical analogue evoked by Spenser's situation and wording, Aeneas's great speech to Dido:

¹⁷⁸ Probably there is a connection between tempus and temperance. In iconography, for instance, one of the virtue's attributes is the hourglass - see Guy de Tervarent, Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane, 1450-1600: dictionnaire d'un langage perdu, Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance, 29, 3 vols (Geneva, 1958-64), I, column 220, s.v. Horloge I.

infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem,
Troianas ut opes¹⁷⁹ et lamentabile regnum
eruerint Danaï.

The allusion to Aeneas burdened with Troy's ruin, from which he narrowly escaped, leads one to expect that Guyon is about to reassert his identification with Ruddymane, who survives his parents' death stained with their blood, unable to wash his hands of fallen Nature. That the knight does so, ultimately, saves a parallel too striking to be abandoned. Yet why the delay? Even here one appreciates Nelson's view that 'what [Spenser] borrows he makes his own, without the slightest respect for the integrity or the intention of the original'.¹⁸⁰ Yet such irreverence towards venerated sources seems inherently unlikely. More respectably, and more productively, the delay could be a silent instruction to superimpose Ruddymane on Gloriana: temperance per se, qua reminder of original sin,¹⁸¹ screens off the perspective of glory which it implies qua aspect of magnificence. That is why Gloriana, who haunts Arthur's memory, has almost faded from Guyon's. That is why he can only remember, not see, her present. The passage also enacts the need for temperance in the pursuit of poetic glory. Spenser could not wash his hands of Virgil. The Faerie Queene shines because it has the grace to be eclipsed by the Aeneid.

Does the Letter's account of Guyon qualify as a complementary allegory, introducing the theme of Book II? It certainly imposes Ruddymane on Gloriana - a fact that stands out precisely because it appears to contradict the poem. Moreover, he is brought in by a Palmer, one who has made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land,¹⁸² the natural, temporal Hell into which God descended, and thus a symbol focussing redemption as co-mortification with Christ. And then, just as in the section on Red Cross the Letter gives away the poem's tenor, so in the section on Guyon it exposes the illusoriness of its quasi-autonomous vehicle, tearing it down as a narrative Bower of Bliss.

¹⁷⁹ Aeneid II.3-5.

¹⁸⁰ Poetry, p.142.

¹⁸¹ For this see A.D.S.Fowler, 'The Image of Mortality: The Faerie Queene, II.i-ii', HLQ, 24 (1960-61), 91-110 (pp.98-100) - a superb introduction to Book II, even though it unnecessarily focusses on baptism (con-fusion of tenor and vehicle?).

¹⁸² OED s.v. Palmer sb.¹

VII Faeryland

Only one section of the Letter remains to be discussed, its account of Book III. It cannot be acquitted, however, unless we envisage the huge challenge which the Middle Books of The Faerie Queene as we have it pose to the Letter's general programme and my thesis alike. This demands full treatment in separate chapters. Here, as a final preparation of the ground, we must append a note on Spenser's distinction between Faeries and Britons. Though it has been widely discussed in the literature, no truly compelling interpretation has been found so far. Centuries ago John Hughes saw the root of the problem: though there are Faeries and non-Faeries 'the fairies in this poem are not distinguished from other persons'.¹⁸³ Nothing suggests that they have distinctive interests and ambitions peculiar to themselves or that they have mysterious habits and powers that are exclusively theirs. Both Faeries and non-Faeries resort to Gloriana's court. Both are engaged in the same kind of undertakings. All of the poem's action, to the extent that it is described directly, takes place in Faeryland. There are flashbacks to Britain, but Spenser does not mark any boundary. Worse, apart from Arthur the characters that are definitely not Faeries are treated as though they were. Red Cross is 'the valiant Elfe' (I.i.17), 'that Faery knight' (v.1), 'th'Elfe' (vii.7), while Artegall is addressed by the Giant with the Scales as 'thou foolish Elfe' (V.ii.37) and referred to by Radigund as 'yond Fayry Knight' (v.32). Only because the reverse does not apply can we speak of them as 'definitely not Faeries'. And to do so seems pointless if the negation is purely nominal. Hence few share Hankins's view that Faeries and non-Faeries are beings with a different ontological status.¹⁸⁴ Critics tend to concentrate on the one passage that promises a clue, the scene at Alma's castle, where Guyon and Arthur read the chronicles of Faeryland and Britain, which offer a striking contrast between the smoothness and serenity of Elfin history and the haphazard, near

¹⁸³ Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.93.

¹⁸⁴ Source and Meaning, pp.46-50. This theory was originally put forward by Rathborne in The Meaning of Spenser's Fairyland, Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature, 131 (New York, 1937).

disastrous course of British history (II.x). They infer that Faeryland is a realm of idealized models set over against the reality of Britain and conclude that the poem explores the tension between real and ideal or presents a drift towards their coalescence.¹⁸⁵

But Spenser's stubbornly similar Faeries and Britons resist the imposition of any such distinction. As we know now, his characters are personifications. So attempts to distinguish between Faeries and non-Faeries as different kinds of creatures or as more and less stylized versions of human beings must be doomed. Actually, the very sameness of Faeries and non-Faeries ought to have produced the insight that they cannot be persons.

Why does Spenser call his knights Faeries at all? They are certainly not 'fairies'. The narrative conjures up the worlds of heroic romance and courtly pageantry, not that of 'fayerye'. Literally the knights belie their species as Arthur does his name.¹⁸⁶ One gathers that they have a symbolic anchorage in fairy lore. The poet himself obligingly identifies some points of comparison. Most notably, he uses the fairies' practice of thieving human infants.¹⁸⁷ Red Cross and Artegall are both reported to have been stolen by Faeries when still babies (see I.x.65-66 and III.iii.26), while the new-born Arthur was positively handed over to a Faery as 'unfit' (I.ix.3). Also, Contemplation remarks that the New Jerusalem, which Red Cross can discern, 'never yet was seene of Faeries sonne' (I.x.52). This, too, echoes a traditional motif. Tuve speaks of a 'privilege which is given to the hero because he is not of supernatural birth, but an ordinary mortal ... entrance into the heavenly kingdom where there are mansions prepared for men but cold shrift for Merlin, Puck, Lucifer, Grendel and the Tuatha da Danann'.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ See especially Berger, Allegorical Temper, pp.89-114, 161-76; also Roche, Kindly Flame, pp.31-50, and Cheney, Nature, pp.8-9.

¹⁸⁶ See p.44.

¹⁸⁷ Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England (London, 1971; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1978), p.731.

¹⁸⁸ 'The Red Crosse Knight and Mediaeval Demon Stories', PMLA, 44 (1929), 706-14 (p.706).

If non-Faeries are destined for Eternity, Faeryland must be Time. From the christian point of view Time would certainly be 'fairyland', a fantasy world in so far as it passes itself off as the ultimate condition of life, since in Christ it has 'already-not yet' been transcended. All the virtues are, as such, Faeries because they are God's glory unfolded and variously adapted to Time. In Eternity there is no occasion for them. Those which are definitely non-Faeries as well constitute temporal variants of eternal qualities: the New Jerusalem is God's holy city, whose advent vindicates His justice. As such they are as it were Time's theft. Magnificence is Time's variant of the New Jerusalem's glory.¹⁸⁹ Yet Arthur has been delivered unfit into Faeryland rather than stolen, in accordance with his reversal of the knights' orientation: 'to virtue' becomes 'from glory to glory'. In him we see Man of 'the same minde ... that was even in Christ Jesus, / Who being in the forme of God, thoght it no robbery to be equal with God: / But he made him self of no reputation'.¹⁹⁰ Arthur remains content to work among Faeries and to love a Faery Queen. Yet he is not a Faery. He knows himself to be 'sonne and heire unto a king, / As time in her just terme the truth to light should bring' (I.ix.5): Time's termination will reveal him as glory.¹⁹¹

That Arthur should be a Briton would follow from his personal identity, if he had any. Spenser subtly botches up his Britain, historically and geographically, to prove it a metaphor. Thus tradition associates Rauran hill and the river Dee (I.ix.4) with Vortigern's Merlin, not with Arthur's. Again, according to Malory king Ryence rules North Wales, not South Wales (III.ii.18), while the river flowing 'amongst the woodie hilles of Dynevowre' and by Maridunum is the Towy, not the Barry (III.iii.7-8).¹⁹² Nor does Spenser's Britain exist over against or alongside Faeryland: we see

¹⁸⁹ Revelation 21.2, 10; 4, 8 // 11

¹⁹⁰ Philippians 2.5-7.

¹⁹¹ Romans 8.14-18; for 'sonne and heire' also Galatians 4.1-7.

¹⁹² See Selden's 'Illustration' to Drayton, Polyolbion X.14, quoted in Variorum I, 265-66; The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, edited by Eugène Vinaver, second edition, 3 vols (Oxford, 1967), I, 38, l.35; C.G.Osgood in Variorum III, 224-25.

no traffic between the two. Rather, it is Faeryland in so far as it has a local habitation and a name, just as Troynovant is the visible aspect of Cleopolis.¹⁹³ Hence Arthur's inglorious chronicle of 'Briton monuments'. It symbolizes temperance, virtue as it suppresses glory. That is why it ends abruptly with the succession of Uther Pendragon, 'God': 'an untimely breach' (II.x.68). Guyon's 'Antiquitie of Faerie lond' symbolizes the same in that he, Gloriana's champion par excellence, performing at her court with her picture on his shield (i.28, viii.43, ix.4), needs to be reminded of her, in the ruined chamber of Eumnestes, by a book of history, which he reads 'all this while ... Ne yet has ended' (70) - to be torn from it only by Alma's call to 'supper' with Arthur, when 'the time was fled' (77). One appreciates why it is in the Proem to Book II that Spenser whimsically advertizes the elusiveness of Faeryland.

Another fairy motif, used implicitly, is the association of fairies with death. 'They are fairies; he that speaks to them shall die', says Falstaff.¹⁹⁴ Bennett notes that 'the medieval queen of fairies was identified with Proserpina, queen of the realms of the dead'. However, she opines that, since Gloriana is a complimentary type of Elizabeth, Spenser cannot be taken to attribute this role to his Faery Queen.¹⁹⁵ But he does, symbolically. As we have seen, she represents 'perfection in mortalitie' (II.ii.41). And virtue means obedience unto death. Indeed, to Guyon Faery Court looks like the 'Gardin of Proserpina', in one of its aspects (II.vii.53). Not that the motif fails to suggest the perspective of Eternity. Arthur's legendary namesake, after receiving his fatal wound, was transported by the Ladies of the Lake to Avalon, 'the one spot in the British Isles which is a part of Fairyland', as Hankins says, there to await the time for his destined return. In this connection we may refine this critic's view that Panthea means Glastonbury as the seed from which the British Church was to spring.¹⁹⁶ As Troynovant is the visible aspect of Cleopolis, so Glastonbury would be the visible aspect of its sanctuary, to mean the Church as an institution. The

¹⁹³ p.45 above.

¹⁹⁴ Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor, V.v.48 (I owe the reference to Thomas, Religion, p.734).

¹⁹⁵ Evolution, pp.8-9.

¹⁹⁶ Source and Meaning, pp.201-204.

Grail city does indeed form part of the poem's vehicle: 'Briton monuments', as an allegory of temperance, contains an obliterating allusion to it (53), just as it mentions the rebuilding of a Troynovant itself ruined (46).

Spenser's story of Arthur, his dream of the Faery Queen and his search for her in Faeryland, directly imitates Chaucer's 'Tale of Thopas', as Bennett has demonstrated. Yet to her it is self-evident that 'we cannot suppose that he borrowed Chaucer's burlesque Sir Thopas as the basis of a grand heroic poem symbolizing the search of Virtue for Glory. He came to that in the end, but we need not suppose that he began there'.¹⁹⁷ So one's sense of decorum suggests. But then, 'whether or not the story of Arthur's falling in love and vowing his great quest is part of the debris of an earlier version of The Faerie Queene, the poet did include it in the work which he presented so proudly to Queen Elizabeth. If narrative of this kind is what Gabriel Harvey objected to when he described that draft of the poem that Spenser sent him in 1580 as "Hobgoblin runne away with the Garland from Apollo" the criticism still holds for the work as we have it'. Nelson's point is unanswerable, all the more so because the evolutionary theory does not hold water. Though his emphasis on the poem's comic elements distorts its overall impact, one must agree that Spenser is 'jesting ... at his own fiction' and finds 'nothing incompatible in the association of an absurd tale and a deeply moral significance'.¹⁹⁸ But why should this be so? Fowler writes that 'in spite of a possible allusion to the Tale of Sir Thopas, it is quite unnecessary and inappropriate to suppose any comic intention. Spenser was well able to take an unfinished thread from Chaucer ... and work it in entirely to his own purpose ... The use of literary material in this way is really a kind of manneristic alienation effect, emphasizing the literary status of the fiction'.¹⁹⁹ This shows tact and insight, but also a certain faintheartedness. After all, Arthur's story is not simply one among many but a metaphor unfolding and infolding the entire poem. The incongruity of the borrowing lies at the very heart of the work.

¹⁹⁷ Evolution, pp.11-23 (p.18).

¹⁹⁸ 'Spenser ludens', in Theatre, ed. Kennedy and Reither, pp. 83-100 (pp.95-96, 83, 96).

¹⁹⁹ 'Emanations', pp.81-82, n.60.

The 'Tale of Thopas' is not a straightforward parody of a deplorable romance type but Chaucer's joke at his own expense. The author of The Canterbury Tales casts himself in the role of one of his imaginary pilgrims, whose narrative contribution, so far from constituting the gem of the collection, as might be expected of one from a renowned court poet, is rudely interrupted by the Host as 'nat worth a toord'. One suspects, though, that the joke could be at the expense of the Host as well, who, despite his vociferous self-assertion, is hardly one's final arbiter in literary criticism. He may be a connoisseur of 'chaff', but he has no taste for 'fruit'. To him, the imaginary originator of the tales project, it seems a tremendous game. So it is to Chaucer, its real originator, but with a difference: for him the entertainment enhances it as an exploration of the human condition, the great pilgrimage from which the Host is so eager to be distracted. The apparent ridiculousness of the 'Tale of Thopas' is indeed ironic self-depreciation on the part of its narrator, who can do better - witness the Tales as a whole. But it is also an implicit indictment by Chaucer the pilgrim, whose mind is elsewhere -

He semeth elvyssh by his contenance,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce

- of readers who will not see that the work really caters only for 'pilgrims'.²⁰⁰ The barely disguised didacticism of his 'Tale of Melibee' brings the point home. In basing the core of his Faerie Queene, the 'unfinished' story of Arthur and Gloriana, on Chaucer's abortive romance, Spenser hints that qua narrative his entire poem amounts to a mere hotch-potch of loose ends. He also intimates why: his mind, too, is elsewhere. He must not be taken to be less appropriately preoccupied than Chaucer the pilgrim, in spite of his voluminous concession to the contemporary demand for fiction as 'delightfull and pleasing to commune sence' (L40). Indeed, he must not, for this concession, itself 'elvyssh' throughout, is in fact the most magnificent literary expression since The Canterbury Tales of Time as a pilgrimage to Eternity.

²⁰⁰ The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.N. Robinson, second edition (London, 1957), p.167, l.930; p.164, ll.703-704.

I What is Wrong with the Middle Books?

In Books III and IV The Faerie Queene loses its bearings as narrative. They deviate altogether from the pattern common to the Outer Books, which, to judge from the Letter, represents a norm. One expects that each Book will be dominated by a single male hero, identified in its title, whose adventures in carrying out a mission undertaken at Faery Court come full circle within its confines. Book III has a woman, Britomart, for its titular hero. Book IV has two titular heroes, Cambel and Telamond, the second of whom appears in the narrative as the trio Priamond, Diamond and Triamond. No mention is made of Faery Court as the starting point of the titular heroes' adventures. Indeed, Cambel and 'Telamond' are not questing at all. Britomart is, but for private purposes, to find Artegall, her destined lover, not to redress a public wrong. Besides, she not only dominates Book III but figures prominently in Book IV as well, where she finds Artegall. Even in Book V she plays a conspicuous part, rescuing Artegall from Radigund. By contrast, the titular heroes of Book IV are no more prominent than its other major characters, while they appear only in Cantos ii-v, thus failing to make the Book distinctly theirs.

True, the Letter's specific account of Book III (L121-34) would have it conform. It treats the male Scudamour as the Book's main character and the overthrow of Busirane as its main adventure, analogous to the overthrow of the Dragon and Acrasia in Books I and II. But the Letter's gesture looks spurious. It cannot make Scudamour a titular hero. Nor can it alter his lack of prominence, which differentiates him so markedly from the Outer Books' knights. He figures only in Cantos xi and xii, and even there he is virtually eclipsed by Britomart. Though the poet admits that with his story 'many other adventures are intermedled' (L130-31), this strikes one as a disingenuous assertion of Scudamour's primacy rather than as an honest acknowledgement of the true state of affairs. Besides, Book III contains no flashback to Faery Court, thus leaving us uncertain whether Scudamour's adventure is a mission. He seems to seek his private happiness, which depends on the release of his lady Amoret,

rather than disinterestedly to oppose Busirane's practice as a public evil, on the model of the Outer Books' quest heroes. Gloriana's authorisation seems unnecessary and inappropriate. And then, Britomart, not Scudamour, overcomes the enchanter. Finally, though in the 1590 edition Scudamour's story, brief as it is, looks manifestly complete, he reappears all the same in Book IV, just like Britomart. (Hence, it would seem, the different ending to Book III in the 1596 edition.) In short, Book III fails to correspond to the pattern, in spite of the Letter.

One way of solving the problem would be to say that there is none. Simply decide that the Outer Books are apparently not normative, and you will welcome the Middle Books as a refreshing variation in narrative structure: a Two-Book unit. Of course, this would be to rule the Letter out of court and to absolutize the narrative. But then, our thesis that Spenser's stories are unreal goes only a little way towards making the Middle Books fall into place. It does not remove or explain the discrepancies. Thus, if Scudamour is a personification, his lack of narrative prominence in Book III would not disqualify him from being its main character any more than Arthur's apparently subsidiary role disqualifies him from being the main character of The Faerie Queene as a whole. But why is he so inconspicuous compared with Red Cross and Guyon, his alleged counterparts? Similarly, if Scudamour's story in Book III is a metaphor, it might mean the same thing as the Letter's account of it. But why does he not depart from and return to Faery Court or else, like Guyon, perform at Faery Court? Again, if the narrative is illusory, Books III and IV could be distinct units like the Outer Books, in spite of having most of their major characters in common. Perhaps, indeed, Spenser's choice of Cambel and Telamond, who figure in Book IV only, as its titular heroes serves to bring home its separateness, and by implication that of Book III. Their minor status would be as immaterial as Scudamour's. It would be equally puzzling, though. Besides, which of the characters in Book IV performs a mission? And where is its counterpart to the other Books' evil powers, the Dragon, Acrasia, Busirane, Grantorto and the Blattant Beast? No sequel to the Letter could have offered plausible answers. Moreover, the unreality of narrative continuity across the

Books' common frontier would not explain why they share so many characters. Anyway, with respect to the Middle Books our thesis seems less persuasive than ever. Arthur's story may explode at the slightest touch. And those of the Outer Books' knights may yield when pressed. But in the Middle Books none of the chief characters appear to have bound themselves to perform a single task. Hence the inconsequentiality of their adventures does not obviously make them non-sequential. Like Arthur these characters seek sexual fulfilment, Britomart in *Artegall*, Scudamour in *Amoret*, Timias in *Belpheobe*, Florimell in *Marinell*. But unlike Arthur they are not manifestly recurrent symbols. Their relationships with their partners undergo overt transformations as Arthur's relationship with Gloriana does not. As a result there is a powerful suggestion of real developing narrative.

This and the final chapter scrutinize a fair sample of the episodes that appear to make for a Scudamour story and a Britomart story, to establish their disconnection: we shall be flogging a horse that is only logically dead. In this section we must, in faith, anticipate the outcome and sketch the conceptual rationale for the Middle Books' idiosyncrasies, so that, once on our explosive mission, we can promptly re-use the narrative rubble to build the allegorical edifice. To recapitulate, Spenser's theme is magnificence, the moral and, therefore, temporal manifestation of Man's redemption in Christ. As aspects, merely, of magnificence the individual virtues are all glory 'already-not yet'. Considered individually, though, these aspects relate differently to glory. Thus holiness is transparent, whereas temperance is opaque.¹ Hence the Letter's programme of variously uniform quests. Now certain virtues have in common something more specific than glory 'already-not yet': they relate to the same aspect of it. Such is the case with chastity, friendship and justice. As we shall see, they all reflect, in different ways, Eternity's transcendence of separate existence, as against, say, its holiness, reflected in the virtue of the same name, or its timelessness, reflected in constancy. Spenser may be intent on 'the more variety of the history' (L68). Even so disregard for Book boundaries, displayed more or less extensively by so many characters in the Middle Books, does not betoken a departure from the narrative

¹ pp.18-23, 62, 66.

norm for its own sake. It invites comparison with Arthur's inclusive scorn. Just as Arthur unfolds and infolds glory generally, so these characters unfold and infold it qua one-ness. Like Arthur they symbolically bracket the virtues under whose rubrics they perform.

To comprehend the triad of virtues it will be best to take the middle term, friendship, first. Spenser means New Testament ἀγάπη. For Telamond, a titular hero of Book IV, is the son of Agape (ii.41). His own name confirms and illuminates the equation. St Paul calls ἀγάπη 'the bond of perfectnes'. Note that he does not say 'the perfect bond'. He means that ἀγάπη is Man's perfection in Christ considered as all the virtues united;² or, to use the alternative biblical phrase, 'the fulfilling of the Law': 'the end (τέλος) of the commandment is love'.³ The virtues come to a head in ἀγάπη, the love with which christians are to love their neighbour as themselves, because it identifies them with each other as aspects of the Body whose Head is Christ, making them 'perfect in one'.⁴ Ἀγάπη infolds distinct virtues, to glory, as it does separate individuals. 'Telamond', as τέλος mundus, means 'end world' while, as τελαμών, it means 'band'.⁵ So the Legend of Friendship concerns mutual integration. However, for the Time being this integration cannot manifest itself beyond togetherness. Already the faithful 'mete together ... unto a perfite man' (εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον). But this is as yet a body with many members, receiving 'increase ... unto the edifying of it self in love ... according to the effectual power, which is in the measure of everie parte'.⁶ Correspondingly, the virtue to end all virtues is still a distinct virtue, with a Book to itself. As Paul says in his famous chapter on ἀγάπη, 'when that which is perfite (τὸ τέλειον), is come, then that which is in parte (τὸ ἐκ μέρους), shalbe abolished'.⁷

² Colossians 3.14 (σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος). See Calvin ad locum: 'vocat vinculum perfectionis: quo significat, virtutum omnium chorum sub ea contineri' (Opera, Volume 52, column 123).

³ Matthew 13.10; I Timothy 1.5.

⁴ Matthew 19.19, Romans 13.9; John 17.23 (τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν).

⁵ - and, as M. Leslie informs me, 'baldric' (Iliad XVIII.480). Arthur's baldric (I.vii.29) makes him 'the perfection of all the rest' (L64) even as it equates him with Telamond in particular.

⁶ Ephesians 4.13, 16; and compare Romans 12.4-5.

⁷ I Corinthians 13.10.

At this point I must sound a brief warning. The discussion of ἀγάπη might evoke Nygren's disjunction of ἀγάπη (gift love) and ἔρως (need love), adopted by some Spenser scholars. It should not, for this is unbiblical, formally and, indeed, substantially. Man fallen 'to pieces' is bankrupt and has nothing to give. He cannot put himself together again. Ἀγάπη means to confess in action one's debt, as part, to the New Man in his one-ness.⁹ The word ἔρως does not occur in the New Testament. Nor does its philosophical meaning, under another name. What it means in common parlance, sex, does - as an expression, or perversion, of ἀγάπη. We 'möchten ... meinen, daß [Nygren] - abgesehen von seinen uns fragwürdig erscheinenden philosophischen Voraussetzungen - der von ihm selbst namhaft gemachten Gefahr, dem geschichtlichen "Material ein fremdes Gedankenschema aufzuzwingen" ... nicht völlig entgangen ist'.¹⁰

How do chastity and justice relate to the same aspect of glory as friendship? Chastity is nothing if not an exclusive virtue: it confines sexual communion, the deepest experience of mutual integration, to marriage or even renounces it altogether in celibacy. Compared in their own right friendship and chastity seem contrary tendencies. But then, the proposition was that Spenser brackets them in respect of glory, not of any similarity qua virtues. Friendship reflects the one-ness of Eternity in that it liberates individuals from separateness by bringing them together. Chastity reflects the same in that, while leaving individuals imprisoned in separateness, it makes them even so whole. This may seem obscure. Does marriage, so much more typical than celibacy, not bring husband and wife together? It does, from the congregational point of view. From the sexual point of view, though, it makes them a single separate entity, 'one flesh', embodying the whole Church of Christ - not, indeed, obviously but as 'a great secret'.¹¹ Apparently friendship

⁸ e.g. C.S. Lewis (see p.21), and Enid Welsford, Spenser: Fowre Hymnes: Epithalamion: A Study of Edmund Spenser's Doctrine of Love (Oxford, 1967), Introduction, pp.10-11, 87-88, et passim.

⁹ Romans 13.8; and, by implication, Luke 10.36-37.

¹⁰ Viktor Warnach, Agape: Die Liebe als Grundmotiv der neutestamentlichen Theologie (Düsseldorf, 1951), p.6.

¹¹ Ephesians 5.31-32 (μοστέριον - whence 'those mysterious parts', Milton's periphrasis for the sexual organs, Paradise Lost IV.312).

overcomes separateness whereas chastity submits to it. As a matter of fact neither would reflect 'God ... all in all',¹² togetherness in wholeness, without the other.

As for justice, this virtue seeks to maintain or establish peace by preventing or putting right abuses to which existence in separateness lends itself. Like friendship and unlike chastity it is an interpersonal disposition. However, unlike friendship and like chastity it apparently submits to separateness: it perpetuates it as it adjusts it. Combining the two characterisations one sees that, where friendship and chastity variously heal the wound of separateness, justice keeps it open. Worse, it may have to disturb peace, in spite of itself. How, then, does it reflect the one-ness of heaven? By definition it is that eternal quality,¹³ dynamically immersing itself in Time as virtue. Friendship and chastity are by definition virtues. Justice heralds even as it postpones the Day of Judgement, when 'righteousnes and peace shal kisse one another'.¹⁴ For the Time being it is 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding',¹⁵ peace in God's will that as yet the fight must go on, which will prove peace at the last.

According to this conceptual outline friendship, chastity and justice demand synoptic treatment. That is why Spenser brackets Books III-V, through Britomart and Artegall. They stand out from those surrounding them as one massive block of Britomart-Artegal fiction, what with Britomart dominating Book III and Artegall Book V, while together figuring no less prominently than any other pair in Book IV. On this view it is altogether fitting that Britomart should be the titular heroine of Book III. And one begins to appreciate the order of Spenser's Legends. Justice comes last, as the eschatological virtue. And the 'bond' of Friendship joins it with Chastity. By the way, all three are 'private morall vertues' (L30). We may reject the notion of any broadening from private through social to political virtue, largely due to mistaking the historical allegory of Book V for its tenor.¹⁶

¹² I Corinthians 15.28.

¹³ Compare p.70.

¹⁴ Psalm 85.10.

¹⁵ Philippians 4.7.

¹⁶ See p.38.

Our outline also explains why, within the Three-Book unit, Spenser brackets off Books III-IV, through Scudamour and Amoret: chastity and friendship are not by definition glory. Besides, it suggests why it is through Scudamour, of all characters, that the Middle Books are yoked together. This is extraordinary if he should be the quest hero of Book III, as the Letter has it. All the other quest heroes represent a single virtue and figure, if not exclusively in one Book, at least not more than marginally in other Books: so not only Red Cross, Guyon and Calidore, but even Artegall, who is primarily patron of justice and brackets Books III-V only in conjunction with Britomart. If one trusts the Letter's account of Book III, Scudamour's reappearance in Book IV makes him its quest hero too. And indeed, among the manifold stories in this, seemingly the least organized of all the Books, the only one at all suggestive of a mission is Scudamour's adventure at the Temple of Venus, in what some would call its core Canto, x. True, it is only part of its Scudamour narrative, which does not as a whole read like a quest. But then, "quest" ... [does] not really specify narrative'.¹⁷ It symbolizes any virtue. Even on its own, of course, the Temple of Venus episode would be defective as a narrative quest, in lacking a counterpart to the other Books' evil powers, just as the Busirane episode is defective as such in lacking any significant action on Scudamour's part. In both the knight seems to be on private business. However, just now specifying the literal narrative is less crucial than realizing its symbolic status. The union of Scudamour and Amoret, never fully realized, focusses the similarly elusive union of Arthur and the Faery Queen, glory, as heavenly one-ness. Scudamour's two defective quests, like his defective union with Amoret, symbolize this aspect of Eternity differently clouded by Time as chastity and friendship. Now they are both his quests because, as we have seen, the virtues they stand for do not reflect togetherness in wholeness independently. Chastity and friendship are jointly 'to glory' - Amoret as the common orientation of Scudamour's two quests - as well as separately 'to virtue', like all distinct aspects of magnificence.¹⁸ To compensate for this irregularity they are bracketed in with justice, 'from glory' as well as 'to virtue'.

¹⁷ p.57.

¹⁸ See p.59.

The quests of Spenser's knights differ according to the virtue towards which they unfold glory. So, to the extent that Scudamour's quests 'to virtue' are 'to glory', they ought to be a single quest. The poet obliges. Their narrative defectiveness, separately, is precisely such as to make them, jointly, a single quest analogous to those in the Outer Books. The Busirane episode takes over where the Temple of Venus episode leaves off, the latter providing the action and the former the evil power. The sequence of Canto numbers, too, IV.x - III.xi-xii, encourages this reading, especially since there is no Scudamour material in III.i-x and IV.xi-xii: Book III wants Book IV superimposed on it. Apparent chronology would be another consideration. The confrontation with Busirane seems to follow on, via the lovers' wedding (IV.i.1-4), from the adventure at the Temple, which is a flashback. That the resulting Book as it were continues into itself merely highlights a circularity common to all the quests¹⁹ - appropriately, in view of its knight's orientation. One rejoices to see the poet's basic faithfulness to his narrative scheme even in the Middle Books. To be sure, Scudamour's composite quest still deviates. Thus, uniquely, he fails to overthrow his ultimate antagonist, as even the Letter roundly admits (L127-28). This deviation is more apparent than real, though. Since Busirane represents what separates him from Amoret, the fact that he secures her in IV.x implies that he does overthrow him. That is, he overthrows him 'already-not yet'. Spenser emphasizes 'not yet', as he must in virtues 'to glory'. But the sheer imbalance between the chastity and friendship components of Scudamour's quest hints that, even so, his failure is merely an emphatic variant of the anti-climactic returns to Faery Court in the Outer Books. Our conceptual outline accounts for Spenser's correlation of friendship with 'already' and of chastity with 'not yet'.

Scudamour deviates from the Outer Books' quest heroes also in failing to depart from and return to Faery Court. Or does he? Book II has taught us to be ready for meaningful complications.²⁰ After describing the Garden of Adonis and Amoret's training Spenser adds:

¹⁹ See p.58.

²⁰ See pp.65-66.

To Faery court she came, where many one
Admyrd her goodly haveour, and found
His feeble hart wide launched with loves cruell wound.

But she to none of them her love did cast,
Save to the noble knight Sir Scudamore,
To whom her loving hart she linked fast
In faithfull love, t'abide for evermore,
And for his dearest sake endured sore,
Sore trouble of an hainous enemy;
Who her would forced have to have forlore
Her former love, and stedfast loialty,
As ye may elsewhere read that ruefull history. (III.vi.52-53)

This clearly alludes to Amoret's sufferings at Busirane's castle. We are not told, though, whether here or elsewhere in the poem, how he abducts her from Faery Court nor, indeed, that he does. In fact, these lines imply that her 'hainous enemy' resides at Faery Court. So Scudamour's efforts against Amoret's tormentor and, hence, also his exploits at the Temple, which apparently precede them, take place at Faery Court, like Guyon's quest. Yet unlike Guyon's quest Scudamour's is never referred to as a pageant. Remembering that chastity and friendship are 'to virtue - to glory', one infers that Scudamour's quest is a return to Faery Court. Indeed, in the previous paragraph we virtually identified its unsuccessful part against Busirane as such. Also, because of the delaying preview quoted in this paragraph Book III in effect returns to it, 'not yet'. And Book IV returns to it in the successful part at the Temple, 'already', by presenting this as Scudamour's flashback at the end of his story, not until then literally a quest. What all the virtues are qua aspects of magnificence, glory 'already-not yet', Scudamour's virtues are, jointly, per se. Where holiness is transparent and temperance opaque, chastity-friendship is refractive: it breaks up glory, witness even its dual appellation.

One must admire the unobtrusive skill with which Spenser defines this virtue allegorically in the Letter. There Scudamour's adventure, as a pageant at Faery Court, symbolizes glory, since, as with Red Cross, Gloriana has no Ruddymane imposed on her. The explicit mention of Scudamour's failure qualifies this to glory 'already-not yet'. His orientation 'to virtue' distinguishes this from magnificence generally. And 'to virtue' becomes even so 'to glory' as soon as we grasp that the complaining 'Groome' (L122) is none other

than Amoret's bridegroom, Scudamour himself, returning. Or rather, the groom is Gloriana's bridegroom, Arthur, turning about face to specify himself as Scudamour. In summarizing Book III the Letter does not apparently contradict the poem as it does in summarizing Book II. It does not prompt us to smash the narrative.²¹ It merely presents a part, Scudamour's quest, as though it were the whole when, as far as we can see, it is not. Thus it symbolizes chastity as wholeness ἐκ μέρους. Also, it surveys the remaining part of the narrative as a series of manifestly separate adventures, with the warning that these 'are intermeddled ... rather as Accidents, then intendments' (L130-34). In other words, it breaks up the story into self-contained fragments synonymous with the whole just as chastity breaks yet preserves glory, 'the whole intention of the conceit' (L137).

II The Busirane Episode

(i) A Separate Whole

The introductory sketch argues mostly by deduction, rather like GROUNDWORK. Its explanatory power illustrates, implicitly, certain limitations of literary empiricism as a heuristic method. Needless to say, deduction does not supersede close reading as, among other things, validation. Indeed, the 'actual text' could have elicited greater understanding than it has. Given its manifest inconsequentiality, it positively invites examination of junctures, for instance. Yet the common approach has been quasi-intuitive; usually episodic, and rightly so, while nevertheless taking for granted narrative sequence. Thus Roche offers separate accounts of Amoret with Busirane, in the Garden of Adonis and at the Temple of Venus. He even treats the 1590 ending of Book III independently. Yet he deals with the last three of his units in a section entitled 'Amoret's Education', which opens with an overview of her appearances readjusted in their 'proper', chronological, order. This must be a narrative summary, all the more so because it mentions Amoret's wedding as though taking place after her capture by Scudamour in the Temple and providing the occasion for her capture by Busirane.

²¹ Compare p.67.

Moreover, Roche uses this wedding to interpret the Busirane episode. While he sees that Spenser's characters are anchored in concepts, he finds them not consistently representative because 'subject to the tugs and pulls of story-telling'.²² Similarly, for C.S.Lewis 'it goes without saying that Amoret's childhood in the Garden and her womanhood in the Temple of Venus are not really two successive stages in a biography. We should think of them, rather, as two co-temporal aspects of the way of life she symbolizes'. Yet this does not prevent him from ascribing the 1596 ending of Book III to 'the exigencies of the plot' and claiming that 'no doubt in the complete Faerie Queene the original passage would have been used somewhere else', that is, one gathers, at a suitable stage in the narrative.²³

Such complacency certainly exasperates those not attuned to romance. Too bad, one might say. The sympathy of the cognoscenti becomes dubious, though, when they turn out to be at cross purposes. For Roche it does not go without saying that the Garden episode and the Temple episode are non-sequential. He imagines, in his summary, that Amoret 'is brought to the Garden ... as an infant but at some point goes to the Temple'. Let the poem arbitrate. It never describes, suggests or even implies any such move. As we have seen, it says that 'to Faery court she came' (III.vi.52). Nor does it permit the conclusion that her residence at the Temple must have occurred in between her departure from the Garden and her arrival at Faery Court, or else after her stay there. For the three stages of Amoret's career in Book III, Garden, Court and House of Busirane, are run tightly together. Moreover, it is at Faery Court that Amoret meets Scudamour. There he becomes one of her many admirers. There she freely bestows her love upon him. So he cannot win her either previously or subsequently, and that against her will (see IV.x.57). To save the narrative one might postulate that the Temple episode, which is, after all, Scudamour's tale, has a personal slant. But 'point of view' cannot create a non-event; unless Scudamour should be fantasizing, or lying. Such desperate skepticism with regard to his tale seems unwarranted, though. Spenser himself vouches for

²² Kindly Flame, pp.72-88, 117-28, 128-33, 133-36, 116, 103.

²³ Images, p.60, 36.

its authenticity, explicitly at the beginning of Book IV (i.2) and implicitly a little later, when he traces Blandamour's hostility to Scudamour to the fact that 'his love he wonne by right' (i.39). Alternatively, one might suppose that Scudamour's tale presents truly but allegorice, in disguise, his relation with Amoret at Faery Court. This will not do either. The tale is an allegory to the reader but not to the audience in the poem, exactly like Arthur's account of his dream.²⁴ Within the fictional world it tells 'in order dew / All that adventure, which [he] did assay / For that faire Ladies love' (IV.ix.40). Only imaginary happenings could relate chronologically - and here they do not. Their allegorical meanings are timeless. Faery Court itself 'is not a place but an allegory'.²⁵ It could not be the setting for any story of Scudamour and Amoret, with a development to be inferred from the correct order of their episodes suitably de-allegorized. Small as it is, the Faery Court episode, the first to connect Amoret and Scudamour, serves precisely to rule out sequence.

One may concede that this mini-episode advertizes neither its importance nor its true function. Coming as it does where the core Canto peters out, all it seems to say is 'to be continued'. Considering the central position and the engrossing theme of the Garden episode proper, critics cannot be blamed for thrusting into the midst, even where it most concerneth them. Unpardonable, however, is their interpretation of Amoret's plight at the House of Busirane as an allegory of the condition in which she finds herself on her wedding day. For Spenser's reference to her marriage comes in Book IV, which appeared six years after the Busirane episode was first given to the public. The poem of 1590 never alludes to any such occasion. Only the Letter does, obliquely, by introducing the 'Groome', whose identity they have not guessed - could not have guessed, assuming real narrative. Now how can you base your reading on information which the poet does not provide, especially when nothing hints that it is being withheld? The 1590 ending precludes any expectation of more Scudamour-Amoret fiction: rapturously final, it leaves one momentarily persuaded that The Faerie Queene could be complete in three Books.

²⁴ p.34.

²⁵ p.58.

Only one answer suggests itself: the process of publication may reflect purely external factors, which cannot be allowed to condition interpretation. By 1590 Spenser may have felt that it would be expedient to give an earnest of a great epic in the making, simply publishing what happened to be in finished form. Or, supposing he had another Book ready, his publisher may have refused to commit himself to more than three, initially. Or perhaps the poet was indifferent to publication. Many poets in his time sought appreciation among a limited circle of patrons and fellow literati, shunning public acclaim or even despising the vulgar. Yet Spenser can hardly have been among them. The scale of his undertaking and its subject, the redemption of Time, militate against the idea of authorial condemnation to ephemeral praise. One who so feelingly bemoans the effects of 'cursed Eld the cankerworme of writs' (IV.ii.33) must have been eager to avail himself of the means to guard his own work against the (imagined?) fate of Chaucer's, which, indeed, it purports to reverse (34). After all, he gives even a private, occasional poem such as Epithalamion to the world to be 'for short time an endlesse monument' (1.433). According to the 1596 Dedication to Queen Elizabeth Spenser means 'these his labours to live with the eternity of her fame'.

One can do little more than speculate about the poet's rate of composition. Amoretti LXXX implies that six Books were completed by the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle in June 1594, on the supposition that he wrote the sequence during his courtship: it came out in 1595. Since the Six-Book Faerie Queene appeared only in 1596, it is possible that in 1590 Spenser was similarly 'ahead of schedule'. Nothing of relevance can be inferred from Marlowe's imitation of a stanza from Book I in II Tamburlaine, first performed in 1587-88,²⁶ or from Abraham Fraunce's quotation of one from Book II in his Arcadian Rhetoricke of 1588.²⁷ Presumably Spenser did not circulate

²⁶ - though not printed till 1590; see Alfred Harbage, Annals of English Drama 975-1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays, Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Authors, Titles, Dramatic Companies, &c., revised by S. Schoenbaum (London, 1964), pp. 52-53. With II Tamburlaine IV.iii.116-24 compare FQ I.vii.32.

²⁷ See Elizabethan Critical Essays, edited by G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols (Oxford, 1904), I, 305. Fraunce quotes FQ II.iv.35.

isolated stanzas. Yet the fact that Fraunce gives Book and Canto number need not imply even his possession of the entire text up to that point. Bryskett refers to The Faerie Queene as a poem 'whereof some parcels had been by some ... seene'.²⁸ Fraunce may have had no more than one such parcel, floating but numbered, like the Mutabilitie Cantos. As self-contained allegories such segments would make sense on their own. Anyway, if Spenser planned publication, he cannot have gone to the trouble of copying out several times over vast stretches of narrative, or to the expense of hiring scribes. The non-existence of manuscripts is notorious and, surely, suggestive. None of the surviving testimonies show whether in 1590 Book IV was ready. However, no matter why only three Books were printed, Spenser could easily have anticipated the wedding of Scudamour and Amoret without pre-empting, since in Book IV it takes up less than two stanzas. He did not. Forgetfulness, or indifference? His writing a provisional ending specially for the first instalment indicates a live response to external factors, rather. One must conclude that correct interpretation of the Busirane episode does not presuppose knowledge of the wedding. Juxtaposed on opposite sides of a Book boundary accentuated as a publication chasm, they cry out to be left apart.

Nor will they join. According to Book IV 'that mask of love which late was shoven' (i.3), namely III.xii.1-28, occurs at the wedding. But in Book III Spenser implies that it occurs every day (28). In fact, what we witness with Britomart would be a repeat seven months later (III.xi.10; IV.i.4). We do not see Amoret on her wedding day. But of course all agree that the Mask is a symbol; Spenser's symbol, that is: nobody takes Amoret to be, allegorico-dramatically, reliving her wedding day again and again, à la Miss Havisham in Great Expectations. Now Busirane could not possibly have brought in Spenser's symbol as an event during an imaginary wedding. Even magicians cannot transcend logic. Roche remarks that 'the initial impact of the mask in canto 12 is one of horror and evil, ill-suited for a wedding feast, but we should remember that it was presented at the wedding'. Not so. Its inappropriateness serves to preclude the 'situational' reading. He sees an analogy with

²⁸ Spenser, Poetical Works, Introduction, p.xxvii.

the wedding mask in Beaumont and Fletcher's A Wife for a Month (1624). But it breaks down at the crucial point: Evanthe, the bride at whose marriage it takes place, is a spectator, not a participant, let alone the kind of ghastly figure at the centre of Spenser's mask (19-21). Renaissance wedding masks, he says, generally reflect the male sense of conquest and were often performed in a context of 'bold bawdry' with little consideration for the feelings of the bride about to be bedded.²⁹ Perhaps. His civilized concern betrays another male prejudice, though, that of woman weak, sweet and clean. Pre-Victorian females may have been roused rather than disgusted by such an atmosphere. And surely they were not normally required to enact a dreadful symbolic travesty of their supposed victimisation. Nor does Spenser constrain us to believe that such, nevertheless, is the fate of his Amoret. For what he explicitly presents as a mask is also manifestly not a mask. It supervenes unexpectedly, disrupting the wedding celebrations and preventing the consummation of the marriage. Now masks cannot do that without ceasing to be masks: as such they are organized performances. Surprise introduction and audience participation may be among their features, but these too will be programmed. Indeed, it seems to have been customary for them to involve the abduction of the bride - but only 'by way of sport'.³⁰ Spenser actually uses these words to specify Amoret's abduction. Yet they cannot cancel out the impression that Busirane abducts her in earnest. So we have here two incompatible conceptions of what happens to her. And both are at odds with her being among the maskers all along. Or does she have a double, like Una and Florimell? Intriguingly, the magician's prisoner in III.xii receives no name until after her liberation. But if she is Amoret then, she must be Amoret when his captive. In any case, he 'conveyed quite away' the

²⁹ Kindly Flame, p.73, 74-75, 76, 75. Incidentally, the play is listed as by Fletcher only in Harbage, Annals, pp.118-19.

³⁰ See E.B.Fowler, Spenser and the Courts of Love, as quoted in Variorum IV, 165-66. He also says: 'That lovers used the disguise afforded by the masque, not only to meet their ladies, but also to steal them away is a matter of common knowledge to students of Shakespeare ... In the last act of Merry Wives Fenton, the favoured lover, circumvents the scheming parents and steals Nan Page during the performance of a fairy anti-masque'. The parallel seems unreal, since Busirane is hardly Amoret's favoured lover. Nor does Fenton bring in a mask when Nan celebrates her marriage to somebody else.

original (IV.i.5). Again, the organisation of a wedding entertainment would hardly have been entrusted to 'that same vile Enchauntour Busyran'. Yet it is he who brings it in. Nor can this be taken to mean that he is its leading actor rather than the master of the revels, seeing that he does not figure in the description in III.xii: there he is very much the man behind the scene. Let us wind up. If the Mask of Cupid both is and is not a mask, it cannot be an event. Therefore Amoret's wedding, during which it is said to be performed, cannot be an event either. Consequently there is no such thing as Amoret's plight on the day of her marriage for the Busirane Cantos to symbolize.

But then, would a troubled wedding not follow on naturally from Amoret's unwillingness to go with Scudamour towards the end of IV.x? Roche takes such continuity for granted without stressing it. Indeed, given his assumption of sequence he makes unjustifiably little of it, in saying that 'the extreme reluctance of Amoret to leave the temple is overcome by the picture of Cupid on Scudamour's shield'. For this is hardly the drift of Spenser's text (supposing it refers to Amoret at all and not, as is more likely, to Womanhood):

when Cupid with his killing bow
And cruell shafts emblazond she beheld,
At sight thereof she was with terror queld,
And said no more. (55)

Even so Roche remains a valid target, because his interpretation of the Busirane Cantos tallies with the correct reading of the lines quoted. He regards the House of Busirane as 'the objectification of Amoret's fears of marriage', which 'are based on moral and physical grounds. Scudamour can dispel neither' because 'unwillingly he is the cause of these fears'. So they cannot have arisen all of a sudden at the introduction of the mask. Roche merely says that it 'crystallizes' them, and he could easily have avoided the awkward addition that Amoret 'turns from a joyful acceptance to a cold rejection of the claims of the physical'. This is how he defines Amoret's plight: 'The dreary assortment of ills that follow Cupid corresponds precisely with the Christian interpretation of adulterous love. These are the effects of love outside Christian marriage, but presumably the marriage of Amoret and Scudamour is a

Christian marriage. Amoret makes no distinction between them'. Hence Busirane is 'an abuse of marriage because the mind he possesses cannot distinguish between the act of marriage and adulterous love'.³¹ Does this make sense? How can Amoret possibly fail to distinguish when Scudamour is in the very process of marrying her 'as did him behove' (IV.i.2)? One could think of three explanations, none of them at all compelling. Christian marriage might actually be similar to adulterous love. This is absurd, and certainly not Roche's view, for so there would be little point in championing marriage as, he thinks, the Middle Books do. Alternatively, Amoret may have been impervious to the prolonged education she has been receiving in the Garden and at the Temple. But it would be perverse to take the one product of these eminent training centres with which the poem acquaints us as a failure. Spenser has Amoret 'lessoned / In all the lore of love, and goodly womanhead' (III.vi.51), without qualifying her docility. In view of the unmistakably sexual character of her schooling Fowler's suggestion that Amoret's fears 'focus on the action of physical sex' strikes one as curiously inept. He wisely hastens to admit that 'sexual penetration appears less unambiguously in Busyrane's masque' than in Colonna's Hypnerotomachia, the alleged analogue that prompted the idea.³² Personally I have not been able to spot it at all. A third possibility is that Amoret's fears are nothing but a momentary delusion. But if so, why on earth should Spenser have made such heavy weather of it? As Hankins says, 'Busyrane seems too sinister a figure to represent merely a bride's nervous qualms before her first sexual experience'.³³

It might seem that Kent Hiatt's corrective of Roche's position avoids all these difficulties. Giving due weight to the fact that 'Amoret is swept away protesting' from the Temple and noting Scudamour's repeated boldness, highlighted in Womanhood's 'sharpe rebuke, for being over bold' (IV.x.54), he argues that 'it is not a shortcoming of Amoret ... that she must view her relation to

³¹ Kindly Flame, p.133, 83, 80-81, 77, 83.

³² Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry (Cambridge, 1970), p.53. Compare also Nohrnberg, Analogy, p.475 and nn. 94, 95.

³³ Source and Meaning, p.162.

Scudamour in terms of the abusive Masque of Cupid, and that she must confuse her marriage with "adulterous" or "courtly" love. It is Scudamour who forces her into this position by his own practice of an aggressive mastery in the Chaucerian sense'.³⁴ However, Womanhood objects not to Scudamour's supposedly forcible manner of approaching Amoret but to his approaching her at all,

Saying it was to Knight unseemly shame,
Upon a recluse Virgin to lay hold,
That unto Venus services was sold.

Now clearly Hieatt would not have Scudamour leave Amoret alone altogether. Moreover, he could not really find fault with Scudamour's retort:

Nay but it fitteth best,
For Cupids man with Venus mayd to hold,
For ill your goddesse services are drest
By virgins, and her sacrifices let to rest.

This is the language of sweet reasonableness, not of unbridled 'amorous passion'. Nor are there any signs of violence in Scudamour's behaviour towards Amoret. Indeed, he shows a lack of determination, having to '[shake] off all doubt and shamefast feare' (53). Even when he proceeds to the conquest, he looks anxiously 'upon the Goddesse face ... for feare of her offence': it is because she smiles reassuringly that he feels 'emboldned with more confidence' (56). Venus, for Hieatt a symbol of harmony and concord, would hardly have countenanced Scudamour's flouting of her values. Also, 'maistrye' is Chaucer's term for repressive domination within marriage. Since the marriage of Scudamour and Amoret never gets under way, he is simply not in a position to practise it upon her in the first place.

We may quote from Roche's rejoinder at some length, seeing that it epitomizes critics' uncertain grasp of Spenser's mode.

Hieatt's suggestion that Scudamour is to blame because of his aggressive mastery of Amoret is not an answer to my position, nor is it the most fruitful way of viewing Scudamour's action at the Temple of Venus ... He assumes that I am blaming Amoret for her false fears.

³⁴ 'Scudamour's Practice of Maistrye upon Amoret', MLA, 77 (1962), 509-10.

Spenser places the blame on Busyrane, and so do I ... He is a universal that the occasion of Amoret's and Scudamour's wedding allows Spenser to bring into his poem before we learn about the occasion. Spenser devotes no time to an explanation of why Amoret is in this situation and never alludes to the culpability of either Amoret and Scudamour.³⁵

This is perceptive, as far as it goes. But Roche cannot act on his insights, because he has not seen them through to their logical conclusion. The fact that the poet introduces mask and wedding separately receives only token acknowledgement. It does not inform his interpretation. Hence his account of Amoret's plight, so far from being immune to Heatt's 'corrective', positively invites it. Ironically, the growing recognition that Spenser's symbolism is bound to affect his fiction's literal coherence has led to fundamental carelessness with regard to his stories as such, even though this tends to remain disguised, whether as a condescending taste for primitive quaintness or as an abject lust for archetypal titillation. It has not prompted the rigorous close reading which alone can expose their narrative shame responsibly, to their allegorical glory. Episodes will be treated arbitrarily as mixtures of metaphor and event. Their interpretations seldom ring true and frequently bear only a tenuous relation to their thematic rubric.

(ii) Personifications

Our conclusion that 'there is no such thing as Amoret's plight on the day of her marriage for the Busirane Cantos to symbolize' says in other words that there is no tenor Amoret for the vehicle Amoret to symbolize. This formulation should bring out the absurdity of critical assumptions to the contrary. Amoret could not be variously real and symbolic as the fancy takes us. Of course, she appears to differ in status from the maskers, Ease, Fancy, and so on - provided you never think twice about

her trembling hart
... drawne forth, and in silver basin layd,
Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart. (III.xii.21)

For no person would survive in this state even for a moment, let alone show at the same time 'a seemely grace, / And ... move a comely pace'(19).

³⁵ Windly Flame, p.129, n.42.

Or are we to postulate, in the face of the evidence, that Amoret displays an artificial duplicate? This would ruin the impact of the scene, which derives from its 'reality', impossible as it is. Insistence on literal sense, not the inference that Amoret is a personification, reduces her to an actress. Nor would the idea that she enacts her state of mind compensate for the loss. On the contrary, such exteriorisation would seem pointless, and tasteless, hyperbole. We must have no truck with 'meanings' that diminish the fiction.

If the episode should be about Scudamour and Amoret as (representative) individuals, why does Spenser do so little to register their presence? Both are lacking in narrative prominence and personal consciousness alike. Scudamour's role is confined largely to the first half of Canto xi. There he voices, unsolicited, a highly rhetorical lament (9-11), which, passionate though it is, defines his anguish on account of Amoret philosophically rather than existentially, in terms of abstract right and wrong rather than of personalities in a mutual relationship. The reader feels indignation at an intolerable injustice but cannot share sympathetically the experiences of the frustrated lovers, since these are never specified and, indeed, hardly ever referred to. For Spenser does not reveal either how Amoret, herself not introduced until the second half of Canto xii, feels about Scudamour during her sufferings. Nothing indicates any awareness of his existence, whether as the cause of her plight, culpable or otherwise, or as her potential rescuer. It is Britomart who, in order to stem the tide of Amoret's effusive gratitude at her release, first mentions him, almost as an afterthought. And the response she elicits, though warm enough in itself, strikes one, in its context, as too laconic to warrant the inference that Amoret must have had him in mind all along:

Henceforth faire Lady comfort to you take,
And put away remembrance of late teene;
In stead thereof know, that your loving Make,
Hath no lesse grieve endured for your gentle sake.

She much was cheard to heare him mentiond,
Whom of all living wights she loved best. (40-41)

The 'huge affection' and 'sweete ravishment' she manifests, in the 1590 ending, on finding Scudamour come rather as a surprise (45). Her disappointment, in the 1596 ending, on finding him absent seems almost casual:

But most faire Amoret, whose gentle spright
Now gan to feede on hope, which she before
Conceived had, to see her owne deare knight,
Being thereof beguyld was fild with new affright. (44)

This hardly suggests that her acute torments inside the Castle are on account of separation or alienation from Scudamour.

Furthermore, most of the episode 'digresses' to provide circumstantial descriptions of the tapestries and the mask, which halt the action without explaining it qua action. For example, exhaustive scrutiny of the loves of the gods does not literally prepare Britomart for her task. C.S.Lewis more than implies this when he says: 'To the characters participating in an allegory, nothing is allegorical. They live in a world compact of wonders, beauties, and terrors, which are mostly quite unintelligible to them ... our own experience ... is divided between sharing the experiences of the characters in the story and looking at their life from somewhere outside it, seeing all the time meanings that are opaque from within'. So he acknowledges, obliquely, the inconsequentiality of the narrative. However, Spenser's characters do not have points of view of their own. It is just not true that 'we see all this erotic imagery through Britomart's eyes'.³⁶ The poet describes it directly, dropping Britomart altogether. There is no occasional 'she sees', 'next she turns to'. And he proceeds too systematically to reproduce the naturally haphazard wandering of a visitor's sight. Much the same applies to the mask. Spenser presents it objectively, without hinting at Britomart's reactions to the various maskers, without conveying mounting tension as the show continues or horror at the appearance of Amoret. Nor, for that matter, is Amoret a vantage point within the fiction: for all her pains she seems totally anaesthetized. There is only one point of view, the reader's. Lewis underestimates more than mildly the difficulties of interpretation. Readers must not

³⁶ Images, pp.28-29.

hope to 'receive the allegory so easily that they forget they have done so, as a man in health is unaware of breathing'.³⁷ Yet it is Lewis, not Spenser, who impedes a unifying response, by childishly relishing the marvels of romance for their own sake and thus playing off the fiction against the meaning.

The Busirane episode itself powerfully undercuts the illusion of being about Scudamour, Amoret and Britomart. To insist that it is all the same, allegorically, would be to confuse the status of the discourse and to attribute to Spenser a counterproductive method: literal, novelistic fiction would have served his purpose far more adequately. Of course, the novel did not yet exist. But there are suspiciously few signs of Spenser straining to invent it. His characters are personifications, complementary metaphors for what the long stretches in which they do not figure also symbolize. We face a consistently allegorical canvas, whose component scenes are interpretively equidistant from the reader, with convergent meanings. Semantically centripetal and lacking in temporal dynamics, it slows us down to a leisurely pace. So far from perversely requiring us to will a story, it prompts us to let go, so that we may linger over every stanza, absorbing it in its concreteness until it becomes diaphanous, a 'shining one'. We need holy respect for the 'actual text', which on the narrative approach can only seem a blocking device, holding up or hiding the story, even stylistically, being full of clichés, heavily padded, unbearably repetitious, and annoyingly self-conscious and emphatic in its artificially intricate rhyme scheme and its 'excessive alliteration'.³⁸

This means that we need to purge the episode of the entirely hypothetical constructions with which the narrative approach contaminates it. To exemplify this let us revert to Roche's interpretation.

Amoret's fears are based on moral and physical grounds. Scudamour can dispel neither. Unwillingly he is the cause of these fears, and any attempt on his part to dispel them would be self-defeating since it would mean her eventual surrender, the basis of her fears.

³⁷ English Literature, p.388.

³⁸ Lewis, Allegory of Love, p.319.

Britomart, on the other hand, can attack these fears on both the moral and physical grounds. As a woman she understands Amoret's attitude towards the physical side of love, and as the exemplar of chastity she is able to make the moral distinction between marriage and adulterous love. Her entry through the wall of flame gives her an intimate knowledge of the House of Busyrane, and ³⁹her understanding finally allows her to release Amoret from her fears.

How extraordinarily remote this is from the text and what it can reasonably be taken to imply. For a start, the argument is all about Amoret's fears. Yet in the poem she actually undergoes excruciating torture. She does not merely anticipate it. To be sure, this torture is an enchantment, which is dispelled. And physical wounds cannot just be dispelled, whereas false imaginings can. Nevertheless, the text pictures a sudden physical recovery, not a mental readjustment (38). Spenser, so far from making Amoret's predicament appear purely illusory, brings out the tremendous, if even so limited, power of Busirane. No other great antagonist in The Faerie Queene, whether the Dragon, Acrasia, Grantorto or the Blattant Beast, communicates his wickedness as disturbingly as does Busirane. Then why reduce the magician from an enemy to morality that everybody has to face to untypical, or even pathological, anxiety? But perhaps modern critics, keyed to psychology rather than ethics, sense no reduction.

Scudamour's efforts are self-defeating, according to Roche, because unwillingly he causes Amoret's fears - not unwittingly. True: only utter insensitivity could have kept him unaware that Amoret's sudden panic results from his sexual demands, however difficult it may have been to understand why. Now for Scudamour to see this is to perceive that from Amoret's point of view a solution by which he will have his way in the end must be a threat. In other words, he knows that it is futile to attempt it. So his efforts lay him open to the charge of sadism. But there is not a shred of evidence in the text that Scudamour sees why he fails, or feels guilty about trying to succeed, or knowingly adopts a policy of 'gently does it'. On the contrary, his lament shows him to be completely bewildered. He has been trying desperately and reviles himself for not succeeding. His efforts are simply in vain. Nor does the text show any difference

³⁹ Kindly Flame, pp.83-84.

of approach between Scudamour and Britomart. She never scolds him for going about things selfishly or tactlessly. She does not seek to dissuade him from trying at all. Together they draw near to the flaming porch, which terrifies her no less than him. Yet she steels herself and passes through safe and sound. Keen to emulate her, he follows her lead, only to fail, for no apparent reason. Spenser does say that 'Mulciber would not obey / His threatfull pride' (xi.26). But this cannot be taken as censure, because Britomart is, if anything, more self-confident than Scudamour. Anyway, Britomart's supposed attempt to dispel Amoret's fears must be aimed at Amoret's eventual surrender to Scudamour exactly like his own.

Nor, pace Roche, is Britomart better qualified to do the dispelling 'as a woman' and 'as the exemplar of chastity'. For one thing, she does not reveal her sex until IV.i.13. Indeed, she causes Amoret some acute misgivings about 'his' designs. Besides, as a woman she is less, not more experienced than Amoret. She has not been educated in the Garden and the Temple and has not even met her own lover in the flesh yet. What could she possibly have to offer? Surely not her 'intimate knowledge' and 'understanding' of the House of Busirane - accomplishments which Spenser, incidentally, denies (III.xi.50, 54). For they can hardly be as profound, after three days, as Amoret's seven months' experience of the place. For another thing, what could justify the assumption that Britomart is more of an exemplar of chastity than Scudamour, one of Gloriana's paladins, and Amoret, the foster child of a Venus reconciled with Diana (vi.25)? What really ails the couple, on Roche's view, is not that they are less than chaste but that Amoret has a distorted notion of chastity and that Scudamour is not sufficiently imaginative to meet her on her own ground. They would need pastoral counselling, not an exemplar of chastity. But even supposing their shortcomings could be construed as flaws in their chastity, how can Britomart's moral superiority be the remedy? Just look at the text. Do we see Britomart lecturing on the definition of chastity and sympathetically exposing fateful misconceptions? Do we see her behaving with exemplary chastity? Are there any signs that Scudamour and Amoret come to see each other in a different light? No, no, no again. Britomart forces an evil magician to undo his work. Of course,

her action is an allegory. That is, it constitutes the vehicle of a metaphor for a given tenor, chastity. We must not think up a tenor story that 'really goes on' in and, more often, behind the ascertainable vehicle story and that is therefore doomed to remain a wildly speculative construct, cluttering up the surface narrative. Spenser's vehicle pure and simple, without any admixture of interpretation, makes far better sense qua story, as far as it goes. Busirane has imprisoned Amoret, lusts after her and tortures her 'all for she Scudamore will not deny' (xi.11). Meanwhile Scudamour does all he can to release her, in the spirit of true knighthood, but without success. Then Britomart comes along and proves more efficient. The lovers are united (1590) or, alternatively, remain as yet separated because Scudamour has left, convinced of Britomart's failure after all (1596). This may be a largely meaning-less pattern from the common stock of romance. But it has enough content to rule out the ludicrous notion that Scudamour causes Amoret's plight and hence to forestall the fanciful explanations this notion inevitably entails. The apparent narrative readily falls into place as Scudamour's quest against Busirane. The knight is not of the magician's party, whether consciously or otherwise.

How do Amoret and Scudamour personify chastity as wholeness ἐκ μέρους? Amoret, to judge from her name, stands for love. She is one of the twin daughters of Chrysogonee (see vi.4-10). Her mother's name means 'golden generation' (from χρυσός and γενεά). This is a paradox, for gold represents the glory of Eternity, as we have seen in another context,⁴⁰ while generation, in so far as it brings about and perpetuates existence in separateness, deprives of glory. Besides, Chrysogonee is 'yborne of high degree', namely Eternity, yet the real child, not the foster child, of a Faery, who is therefore called Amphisa, 'both equally' (4). The name would apply also to Amoret, granddaughter of a Faery yet begotten miraculously 'through influence of th'heavens fruitfull ray' (6). She is anything but a typical human infant. Spenser's apparent rationalisation of the process, in stanzas 8-9, does not state his considered opinion on conception generally - a point solemn astro-genetic exegesis obscures.⁴¹

⁴⁰ p.42. Painters traditionally used it for the 'glories' of saints.

⁴¹ Fowler, Numbers of Time, pp.139-41.

Amoret symbolizes virtue as per se glory 'already-not yet'.⁴² That she symbolizes chastity ('not yet') in particular would follow from Chrysogonee's sense of 'shame and foule disgrace' in spite of her 'guiltlesse conscience' (10) - a veritable contradiction in terms.

Amoret gets adopted by Venus 'in her litle loves stead, which was strayd' (vi.28). Cupid had fled from 'her blisfull bowre of joy above' (11), and in order to find him Venus

left her heavenly hous,
The house of goodly formes and faire aspects,
Whence all the world derives the glorious
Features of beautie, and all shapes select,
With which high God his workmanship hath deckt. (12)

Possibly this alludes to the astrological house of the planet Venus. The goddess chasing Cupid on earth could 'be' the planet in the same sense as Gloriana.⁴³ Thus the identification would not entail that the 'goodly formes' that beautify 'all the world' are confined to a particular section of the sky. Perhaps these 'formes' are to be given a strictly (neo-)Platonic interpretation, which would make their house the Divine Mind. However, its characterisation as a 'blisfull bowre' suggests rather that Spenser simply means heaven, the true Bower of Bliss. Venus in her 'heavenly hous' stands for love in Eternity. Now love does not yet manifest itself as such. That is why we do not actually see Venus in heaven. Her loss of Cupid is not a contingent misfortune in the celestial world, the excuse for a playful literary arabesque, but a symbol of love's eternal essence without, in Time, its visible identity: 'disguiz'd in thousand shapes' (11). Her search highlights orientation 'to glory'. Appropriately, Venus never finds Cupid. She does adopt Amoret, who therefore, as a substitute Cupid, properly belongs in heaven. However, 'she brought her to her joyous Paradize, / Where most she wonnes, when she on earth does dwel' (29) - that is, the Garden of Adonis. And, as the poet says, 'great enemy ... to all ... That in the Gardin of Adonis springs, / Is wicked Time' (39). Now love as threatened by Time, submitting to separateness ('a thousand thousand naked babes' - 32), is chastity, as we have seen. Spenser

⁴² See p.82.

⁴³ Compare p.48, 49.

criticism has mostly gone awry in its eagerness to hail the Garden episode as 'that great philosophic poem in praise of life and generation',⁴⁴ almost as though it were a counterblast against Belpheobe. We must blame C.S.Lewis. In contrasting the natural sex of the Garden with what he sees as its artificial perversion in the Bower, he equates it with chastity by sleight of hand. Marriage is not a natural relationship but a divine institution; and even marital sex is not inevitably chaste. Spenser recognizes the chain of generation as evidence of Man's one-ness, and can celebrate it as such. Obviously, though, generation unfolds rather than infolds the whole Man. It is a natural process which needs a moral dimension, chastity, to control or even check it. Spenser calls the Garden 'so faire a place, as Nature can devize' (29). 'Mr Lewis takes it to mean that the garden is a place so fair as nature alone can devise; whereas it is equally possible that Spenser meant it was the best that Nature could do'. Brooke's early remonstrance hits the nail on the head.⁴⁵ The episode does not urge us to live according to nature and, by means of generation, make ourselves 'eterne in mutabilitie' (47) to boot. So the oxymoron would be a mere manner of speaking, offering no real consolation for personal mortality. We cannot but live according to nature, for the Time being. The episode symbolizes chastity, through which Man is as a matter of fact 'eterne in mutabilitie', whole even while caught up in generation.⁴⁶

Amoret, the representative of the Garden, comes 'to Faery court ... where many one ... found / His feeble hart wide launched with loves cruell wound' on her account (52). Love, intrinsically whole, can manifest itself only as wounded. The lines do not really mean that a certain lady Amoret becomes the idol of many knights. 'Many one', apparently 'many a knight', symbolizes 'love', which is 'many (as) one'. The 'feeble hart wide launched with loves cruell wound', which in the hands of a mediocre sonneteer might have been nothing more than a threadbare image for being in love, here acquires pristine force as a metaphorical definition of love in Time. The verse

⁴⁴ Roche, Kindly Flame, p.116.

⁴⁵ 'C.S.Lewis and Spenser', in Essential Articles, ed. Hamilton, p.14.

⁴⁶ For a similar animadversion see pp.25-26.

describes literally Amoret herself as we see her in the Busirane Cantos. The emphasis on the wound, there as here, suggests love 'not yet', chastity. However, Amoret 'to none of them her love did cast, / Save to the noble knight Sir Scudamore' (53). Apparently she discriminates. Does this not imply that the 'noble knight' contrasts, favourably, with the 'many one', say, as representatives of 'courtly love', whether as a treacherous evil or as a fatuous game? Surely not. We do not learn anything about them other than that they are love-stricken, which hardly warrants a censorious attitude. Also, 'none of them ... save' is inclusive, so that we cannot differentiate Scudamour's love from theirs. Scudamour is not a person, the only one among a crowd to be worthy of Amoret's affection, but a personification summing them all up in one, thus proving Amoret's equal. Hence their commitment to each other. She suffers 'for his dearest sake' (53) because they are synonymous. Conversely, as Britomart says to Amoret, he 'hath no lesse grieve endured for your gentle sake' (xii.40). Literally this will seem preposterous, since he does not share Amoret's physical plight. Does he not accuse himself precisely for that reason: 'Yet thou vile man, vile Scudamore art sound' (xi.11)? Not really. He agonizes over the paradox that love, which is soundness, cannot manifest itself as such - a paradox built into his very name: Scud-amour, 'shield love', love as shield, protecting by bearing the brunt; or, love as (mere) faith. The episode does not tell of two lovers, one in pain, the other almost going scot-free. It unfolds love, highlighting it as suffering in Amoret and as protection in Scudamour, the quest hero. As more obviously protection 'not yet' than protection 'already' he symbolizes chastity in particular. With telling effect Spenser at once defines him in frustrated dissociation from his identifying attribute:

A little off, his shield was rudely throwne,
On which the winged boy in colours cleare
Depeincted was, full easie to be knowne,
And he thereby. (7)

This brings us to the 'winged boy', Cupid, whose brightly attractive appearance here as nothing less than the principle to which noble Scudamour has sworn allegiance would be most uncharacteristic if we were to follow C.S.Lewis in associating him

with 'courtly love' or 'the whole tradition of polite adultery'.⁴⁷ But we will not. The frame of reference for his seminal discussion of the Middle Books is far-fetched, and perhaps imaginary. Scholars are no longer agreed about the nature, or even the existence, of courtly love. Anyway, married love, allegedly Spenser's theme (though none of his couples are actually married), cannot plausibly be treated as courtly love dialectically aufgehoben. Lewis admits that Spenser does not so treat it but confidently ascribes this to the poet's poor historical perspective. We may confidently ascribe to Lewis's richly imaginative perspective - half-creative, as becomes that of an arch-romantic - his tendency to hypostatize a 'false Cupid', which falsifies the poem. True, the allusions to a good Cupid are quasi-incidental and inconspicuous, and hence easily overshadowed by the altar image of the cruel Cupid (xi.47-49) and the tyrant Cupid in the mask (xii.22-23). Nevertheless, their very existence rules out that to Spenser 'false Cupid' must have been virtually tautologous. Cupid is false as presented by Busirane; or rather, as misrepresented by Busirane, an enchanter, whose business it is to distort. The god is (true) love in a false perspective, not a false variety of love exposed in all its horror. If he were, Busirane would in effect be prompting us to avoid it by a mighty deterrent. But we are all subject to his spell. For he avails himself of love's inherent ambivalence in Time. Outside the House of Busirane the god who 'laying his sad darts / Aside, with faire Adonis playes his wanton parts' is manifestly the selfsame god who 'hath with spoiles and cruelty / Ransackt the world, and in the wofull harts / Of many wretches set his triumphes hye' (vi.49). And consider the opening of Scudamour's lament, which surely apostrophizes Cupid:

O soveraigne Lord that sit'st on hye,
And raignt in blis emongst thy blessed Saintes,
How suffrest thou such shameful cruelty,
So long unwreaked of thine enemy? (xi.9)

Apparently an accusation of divine indifference, this really sets up the same paradox as Scudamour's self-accusation two stanzas later. How is it that love, the glory of eternal union, suffers - undergoes as much as tolerates - the shame of temporal separateness? How is it

⁴⁷ Allegory of Love, p.342; Images, p.33.

that God bides His Time, to suffer Himself in Christ? Why does He inflict His salvation? Cupid, like Scudamour and Amoret, personifies love; though, as a god, he personifies it qua eternal quality. That is why he contains and thus highlights the incongruity, where Scudamour and Amoret, vehicles for virtues, unfold and subdue it.

The enchanter Busirane, as the resident evil of Faery Court, is Time in its malign aspect: Time passing itself off as an ultimate, as it always does for the Time being.⁴⁸ As such he not only 'breaks' love - separating Amoret and Scudamour, necessitating two quests - but actually misrepresents it as Time's triumph over Eternity. Seizing on Cupid's incongruity, he distorts it into (self-)destruction. His tapestries reiterate as though endlessly the humiliating metamorphoses of the gods (Eternity) through Cupid's power. They culminate in the revelation that Cupid does not

spare (so cruell was the Elfe)
His owne deare mother, (ah why should he so?)
Nor did he spare sometime to pricke himselfe,
That he might taste the sweet consuming woe,
Which he had wrought to many others moe. (xi.45)

Such overwhelming evidence seemingly warrants a logical impossibility, the casual identification of the god as an Elf. More than that, it appears to turn the worship of eternal love as refracted by Time, 'an Image all alone [i.e. 'many as one'], / Of massy gold' with wings like the peacock's tail or the rainbow (47), into an idolatrous cult of 'the Victor of the Gods', trampling what is surely (though not, perhaps, exclusively) a self-devouring serpent (emblem of Eternity) mangue (48-49, and compare IV.x.40). Indeed, nothing apparently prevents Busirane from clinching his point through the Mask of Cupid, in which 'that Elfe' (xii.22) looks manifestly self-destructive, exulting over his captive counterpart Amoret. Formally a 'triumph', it is a ghastly travesty of the real Cupid who will 'set his triumphes hye' (vi.49) even as he inflicts pain. Yet only if we have our eyes skinned for hidden details, such as Amoret's going unnamed, can we see through the magician. His name associates him with Busiris, the mythical Egyptian king. 'Busiris ... was told that the shedding of a stranger's blood would restore Egypt's lost fertility. Busiris

⁴⁸ Compare p.82, 70.

sacrifices the very seer who came to impart this intelligence'.⁴⁹
The concern of Busiris for fertility intimates Time's demand for generation. Amoret, love as chastity, meets the needs of Time as it really is, finite. But she lives subject to, even as she resists, the illusion of Time's perpetuity, which blots out her raison d'être, so that love appears to make the whole Man fritter himself away in generation.

Commenting on the Mask of Cupid Fowler once wrote that 'the most outstanding feature in the arrangement is, of course, the contrast between the orderly grouping of the characters (phases of emotional experience) that precede the triumphant god and the hurried confusion of the rout that follows. This is clearly meant to convey the difference between earlier and later stages of a sexual relationship'. In a subsequent, more detailed, study he finds himself in a quandary, though:

The first part of the procession includes such traditional obstacles to love as Doubt and Danger, while the last is a 'confused rout' of 'maladies'. We are tempted to speculate that Busyrane's procession may also resemble Ovid's in following the sequence opposition to love / submission to love / love's consequences. Here we meet a difficulty, however. The triumph of Ovid's Cupid has a definite sense: namely, the yielding of the lover to passion ... But Amoret never returns Busyrane's love, so that the masque cannot celebrate her submission to him. On the other hand, her love for Scudamour is socially too acceptable ... to have such evil consequences.⁵⁰

This leaves one wondering uneasily whether the triumph of Spenser's Cupid has an indefinite sense, or perhaps no sense at all. For the 'focussed' synthesis of Roche and Heatt, Scudamour's penis, goes limp for want of textual support. But then, the personifications preceding and following Cupid cannot be bracketed as 'opposition to love' as against 'love's consequences'. 'The first part of the procession includes ... obstacles'. This implies, correctly, that it does not consist entirely of them: Ease, Fancy, Desire, Hope, for instance, do not qualify. Even Doubt and Danger themselves are not certainly obstacles, for, unlike Ovid's 'Mens Bona ... et Pudor, et castris quidquid Amoris obest', they are not bound, 'manibus post

⁴⁹ Nohrnberg's summary of the myth, Analogy, p.476.

⁵⁰ Numbers of Time, p.149; Triumphal Forms, pp.52-53 (the Ovidian reference is to Amores I.ii).

terga retortis' (11.31-32). Actually, the Latin analogue does not have the suggested sequence in the first place. For one thing, it does not specify where the personifications representing opposition to love come in the procession. For another, the personifications that follow Ovid's Cupid, 'adsidue partes turba secuta tuas', are described as love's instruments rather than as love's consequences: 'his tu militibus superas hominesque deosque' (11.36-37). Those specified, 'blanditiae ... Errorque Furorque' (1.35), have counterparts, if at all, among the personifications preceding Spenser's Cupid, Fury and, arguably, Dissemblance (17, 14). Conversely, Shame, the only one of Spenser's personifications with a definite counterpart among Ovid's obstacles to love (Pudor), follows Cupid (24).

Spenser's maskers are not objectifications of Amoret's experience: being a personification she does not have a psyche. Instead they unfold love as distorted by Busirane (Cupid as Elf, Amoret as anonymous 'dolefull Lady'). Love is at ease in Time because whole even while broken. In Busirane's perspective, though, Ease, who introduces the mask, with his name 'in golden letters cyphered' and with his laurel branch, emblem of eternal victory, appears in 'garments, fit for tragicke Stage' and conveys, in a dumb show, 'some argument of matter passioned', which is strangely at odds with what he stands for. But then, he identifies himself as Ease only as he 'backe retyred soft away' (3-4), as though to intimate that the mask will present (love as) departure of ease. And so it does. The maskers preceding Cupid personify so many aspects of separate existence qua threat to wholeness. Spenser sums them up in the gripping picture of Amoret with her heart, her very selfhood, torn out. Inevitably love in Time involves Fancy, Desire, Doubt, Danger, Fear, Hope, and the rest. Busirane's power is not creative but parasitic upon reality. Hence he must allow that 'thus marched these sixe couples forth in faire degree' (18): though disruptive they are even so harnessed by chastity. However, as in the tapestries and the image, he loads the dice. In dismissing Ease he virtually ensures an interpretation in malum of the personifications preceding Amoret, which surfaces briefly in the 'confused rout' of those following her. Without Eternity chastity is meaningless. And without chastity

generative love is 'Shame ... Lewd Losse of Time ... Death with infamie' (24-25), the very opposite of Time's redemption into glory. Only if we resist Busirane are Cupid's followers no more than 'phantasies / In wavering wemens wit'. If we do not, they are 'punishments in hell' (26). Spenser does not trace the emotional experiences, as they develop, of an individual or (un)representative lady: he anatomizes a virtue.

(iii) Variant Endings

It is beyond dispute that the existence of two different endings to Book III appears to undermine the contention that the Busirane episode has a single meaning. True, if its constituent scenes are complementary metaphors, the same could, in principle, be true of its alternative conclusions. But the diametric contrast between them seems in fact to rule out equivalence. It is equally beyond dispute that the 1596 ending appears to establish a narrative link with Book IV. True, the 1590 ending makes the Busirane episode a self-contained Scudamour story. But then, this ending was discarded. As always, we must not deny appearances but assess whether they are real or illusory.

But first let us ponder this question: supposing Scudamour does have a real story running across the Book boundary, why should Spenser have written a provisional ending at all, and a misleadingly conclusive one at that? Climax and fulfilment are, of course, aesthetically satisfying at the end of an instalment. Since The Faerie Queene was serialized at very long intervals, keeping the reader in suspense would have served no purpose. However, the ending of the second instalment, with Book VI, forestalls suspense without in the least resembling a grand finale. Spenser could have done something along the same lines in 1590. This would certainly have been more in keeping with his treatment of the other major narratives in Book III, which he abandons unresolved. In the case of Britomart, the Book's titular and most conspicuous heroine, he even appears to promise a continuation. Indeed, he does so in the very ending and thus mars the note of finality it is specifically designed to convey:

Britomart halfe envying their blesse,
Was much empassiond in her gentle sprite,
And to her selfe oft wisht like happinesse,
In vaine she wisht, that fate n'ould let her yet possesse. (46)

Or are we barking up the wrong tree? Could it be that in 1590 Spenser simply did not yet envisage a sequel to Scudamour's story? Hardly. If he planned the reappearance of the three other couples, Florimell-Marinell, Belpheobe-Timias and Britomart-Artegall, that of Scudamour and Amoret surely cannot have been an afterthought. Also, their story in Book IV is so inseparably intertwined with that of Britomart, whom we invariably see in the company of either, that the continuation of the latter entails that of the former. And then, how 'continuous' is a story that has not been conceived as a whole and whose parts have not even been welded together with great care? Spenser does not bother to motivate Scudamour's change of behaviour. In 1590, 'halfe desperate ... of the hardie Britomarts successe' (43), he stays put. In 1596, though he similarly 'his expectation to despaire did turne', he decides 'thence to depart for further aide t'enquire' (45). Both reactions are too natural to require explicit motivation independently; but on seeing them juxtaposed one expects some modification in circumstances to account for the change - in vain. How awkward, also, that Scudamour's sudden burst of initiative should be occasioned by Britomart's supposed failure rather than by the prolonged sufferings of his own Amoret. Our present understanding of The Faerie Queene makes it unlikely that Spenser decided on quest heroes as he went along anyway. And, for all we know, Book IV may have been written by 1590. The odds are that the misleadingly conclusive ending serves to underline what is implied by the 'perverse' decision to allow publication to sever the Middle Books, namely that Book III, so obviously partial in comparison with Books I and II, is even so whole, and thus about chastity. Spenser enlists even external factors for thematic purposes, redeeming the process of writing from its temporality.

Now for the evidence that the appearance of narrative continuity is illusory. To begin with, contrary to what the 1596 ending of Book III leads one to expect, the beginning of Book IV does not present Britomart and Amoret searching for Scudamour.

Britomart, still to all intents and purposes a man, treats Amoret as 'his' own 'pray' (4) and, indeed, positively abuses her ignorance (7). This may seem a harmless game. The text does not specify her behaviour as lighthearted jesting, though. Taken literally, it is inconsiderate, cruel, morally reprehensible, totally unbefitting the alleged exemplar of chastity. Nor does she reassure Amoret at once, spontaneously: only the custom of the castle and the complications it causes (9ff.) precipitate the revelation of her sex. Amoret, for her part, so far from reminding Britomart of her duty towards Scudamour and of her own commitment to him, for the consummation of which she has supposedly been rescued, is entirely preoccupied by her sense of obligation to her liberator, and with full authorial backing:

For well she wist, as true it was indeed,
That her lives Lord and patrone of her health
Right well deserved as his duefull meed,
Her love, her service, and her utmost wealth.
All is his justly, that all freely dealth. (6)

To be sure, 'nathlesse her honor dearer then her life, / She sought to save'. But this cannot mean that she wants to preserve her virginity for Scudamour instead: she is 'profest a virgine wife'. Amoret persists in her 'aberration' even when Busirane's magic has been dispelled! Of course she does, being an aspect of Gloriana.⁵¹ After the revelation of Britomart's sex they do go in search of Scudamour (16). However, this search, like that of Arthur for Gloriana, remains undescribed as such. Spenser simply says that 'long wandred they, yet never met with none, / That to their willes could them direct aright'. Their subsequent adventure, Blandamour's attack and defeat (33-36), hardly qualifies as a stage in this search. And when the poet refers to Amoret's desire to find Scudamour again later on, he pointedly drops her story at once (v.30, ix.19).

At IV.i.38 Scudamour and Glauce enter on the scene together, just as they had left the House of Busirane together at the end of Book III. Spenser does not remind us of their starting point, though; nor, for that matter, of their purpose: we do not see them enquiring for further aid. He makes Scudamour the object of Paridell's attack, launched at the instigation of Blandamour, who

⁵¹ See p.80; and compare p.52.

hates Scudamour 'because his love he wonne by right' (39) - obviously an allusion to his conquest of Amoret at the Temple of Venus. The energetic confidence with which he meets the challenge suggests that, if the scene follows on from any other scene at all, it must be from the Temple episode, not from the Busirane episode. For his effortless victory does not tally with knightly powers sapped by seven months of hopeless frustration. Nor would Amoret's seemingly irremediable captivity naturally prompt him to vindicate his possession of her. True, Paridell does not tell Scudamour why he attacks him. Does Scudamour, perhaps, fight in mere self-defence? Surely not, for to Blandamour and Paridell it seems that he initiates the clash:

ere long they chaunced to espie
Two other knights, that towards them did ply
With speedie course, as bent to charge them new. (38)

Moreover, Scudamour does not betray any surprise at Duessa's admonition to Blandamour, 'why do ye strive for Ladies love so sore' (46), as he should if it reveals to him what the fight was all about. Nor does he inform his antagonists that he has long since lost Amoret. In short, the scene makes little sense if Scudamour assumes his lady's captivity, as he must if it is continuous with Book III.

But then, Scudamour readily infers that the 'stranger knight' in favour of whom Ate gleefully insists that Amoret has abandoned him (not without apparent justification, as we have seen) is none other than Britomart (50, 52-53). Yet Ate's specification is none too specific:

a stranger knight, whose name
I wote not well, but in his shield he beares
(That well I wote) the heads of many broken speares. (48)

Surely only Scudamour's awareness that he left Amoret in a position to be rescued and therefore, potentially, abused by Britomart previously could explain his inference? As a suspicion, yes. But it does not explain his complete lack of hesitation, for which Ate's indefiniteness allows ample scope. Why does it not occur to him that Amoret may have been seduced by somebody other than Britomart? Is it really perfectly natural for him suddenly to lose all faith in one whose 'huge heroicke magnanimity' and 'bounteous brest' had at

one time inspired such eloquent and unquestioning trust (III.xi.19)? Or if it is, why does it not occur to Glaucé, at least, to suggest alternative possibilities? All we learn is that she 'his flaming furie sought to have assuaged / With sober words, that sufferance desired' (54). Later in Book IV Scudamour can still think of only one possible culprit (v.30 ff. and vi.7 ff.). And how could Glaucé know Ate for a liar 'by assay' (50), having been with Scudamour, not with Britomart? She knows it on principle, knowing Britomart's sex. Yet she never thinks of using this knowledge to refute Ate and extricate herself from a situation where Scudamour's anger puts her life at risk. How absurd, literally. In fact, Scudamour's denunciation of Britomart does not specifically evoke the Busirane episode:

Discourteous, disloyall Britomart,
Untrue to God, and unto man unjust,
What vengeance due can equall thy desart,
That hast with shamefull spot of sinfull lust
Defil'd the pledge committed to thy trust? (53)

Perhaps this qualifies as an allusion. But then, how odd that the implication of Ate's words, that Britomart must have released Amoret from her captivity first, does not, as far as we can tell, necessitate any mental readjustment. After all, he had left the castle 'misdeeming sure that her those flames did burne' (III.xii.45 - 1596). Moreover, after his grand encounter with Britomart, Scudamour himself speaks to her of her victory over Busirane as a matter of course, requesting 'tydings of my love, / My Amoret, sith you her freed fro thence, / Where she captived long, great woes did prove' (IV.vi.34). Nobody has told him about it, nor has he seen his lady with his own eyes. Surely now that he knows Ate's story to be a lie, he must assume that Amoret is still with the magician? He speaks as though he had witnessed her delivery himself. But he has only in the 1590 ending, which Spenser allegedly discarded to ensure narrative continuity.

With no real Scudamour-Amoret story crossing the Book boundary, the 1596 ending cannot be a narrative trait d'union reflecting 'the exigencies of the plot', as Lewis would have it. The Busirane episode remains self-contained. But how are its alternative endings equivalent? Indeed, how could what they have in common,

Amoret's liberation, be equivalent to her captivity? They are as glory polarized within equivalence into 'already' and 'not yet', with the emphasis on captivity, 'not yet', in accordance with the Book's theme. Within equivalence, for Scudamour and Amoret persist in opposing Busirane, however indecisively. The narrative approach misses the significance. It cannot but interpret their stance as the (potential) means to an end, liberation, which in fact fails. It assumes tacitly that, but for Britomart, Scudamour and Amoret would ultimately have had to yield to Busirane. Freedom from Time's spell consists in refusing to acknowledge its finality. For it will not go away, just yet. Accordingly, Amoret's liberation is qualified, in 1596, by Scudamour's disappearance. Their separation means, less dramatically, what exposure to Busirane's magic also means. Again, the narrative approach misses the significance of this separation. It cannot but interpret it as a contingent misfortune, a mere delay owing to Scudamour's laudable but, as it happens, premature decision to seek assistance. The lovers will not be united, ever, any more than Arthur and Gloriana.

The 1590 ending may seem to disprove this categorical assertion. It does not really, though. For in their Hermaphroditic embrace (46) Scudamour and Amoret are still only one *ἐκ μέρους*, unlike the androgynous Venus behind the veil (IV.x.40-41).⁵² Not that their separation is emphasized. On the contrary, they are one 'already', rather than 'not yet' as in the 1596 ending. Spenser can afford this positive note, proper to friendship, because it sounds too briefly to balance the horrors of the Busirane episode. Anyway, the 1596 ending pre-echoes this same note, for the 'further aide' Scudamour sets out to seek is not literal assistance but his reappearance as the vehicle of friendship. What could be the point, though, of provisionally shifting forward, in 1590, the emphasis belonging to Scudamour's second quest? In 1590 the Middle Books are as it were infolded, one whole, while in 1596 they are unfolded, one (because collapsible) together: the structural embodiment of the thematic progression, which, precisely because the later version does not supersede the earlier, redeems the Time of publication.

⁵² Cheney also stresses the union's ambiguity, in 'Spenser's Hermaphrodite and the 1590 Faerie Queene', PMLA, 87 (1972), 192-200.

III The Temple of Venus Episode

(i) Preliminaries

Book III appears to contain only one Scudamour-Amoret episode, the Busirane Cantos - for the references to them in Canto vi seem too marginal to merit the title. So its first publication without Book IV as it were proclaims the unreality of the whole Scudamour-Amoret narrative. Book IV itself is less vocal. Its discontinuity, as far as Scudamour and Amoret are concerned, with Book III has been established. But it contains within its boundaries a whole series of episodes featuring either Scudamour or Amoret, or both. And these seem to demand sequential reading, from his point of view, even though hardly from hers. For we do not see Amoret seeking Scudamour. Her main adventures are her performance at the beauty contest following Satyrane's tournament (v.13-30) and her capture by and release from Lust (vii.1-36). From viii.19 onwards she is under Arthur's protection. During his three adventures, his stay at Slander's cottage (viii.23-36), his vindication of Placidus (viii.38-ix.16), and his settling of the dispute between Druon, Claribell, Blandamour and Paridell on the one hand and Britomart and Scudamour on the other (ix.32-41), she fades out, as though these events do not concern her. To assert that as a matter of fact she goes through these five different experiences one after the other seems vacuous, because their sequence does not reflect, mould or provoke any purpose.

With Scudamour things appear to be otherwise. True, the Temple of Venus episode looks remarkably self-contained. Perhaps no other segment of The Faerie Queene fulfils so nearly the Aristotelian requirement of unified plot, with beginning ('what time the fame of this renowned prise / Flew first abroad' - x.4), middle (Scudamour's sustained purpose) and end ('thus safely with my love I thence did wend' - 58). However, it could be framed off only formally, as Scudamour's tale. As we have seen, Blandamour's hostility, in Canto i, presupposes Scudamour's conquest at the Temple - as a previous event, surely. Scudamour's restless night at the House of Care (v.32-46) seems to relate to Ate's revelation of Amoret's seduction, in Canto i, as (subsequent) effect to cause. So does his urge to take revenge on Britomart (given his rash identification of the

culprit), which he satisfies in Canto vi. The constructive redirection of his energies into a search for Amoret follows on naturally from Britomart's explanation that 'she wandred was, or gone astray' (36), while his reconciliation with Britomart stands to reason, now that he knows her innocence. Of course, neither their joint resistance to 'sterne Druon, and lewd Claribell, / Love-lavish Blandamour, and lustfull Paridell' (ix.20) nor Scudamour's narration of his conquest literally advance his search. But this hardly proves it a pseudo-story. The foursome attack remembering 'the fowle upbraide, / The which the Britonesse had to them donne, / In that late Turney for the snowy maide' (28). And Scudamour tells his tale at their request, a natural expression, surely, of their changed disposition, meeting with the natural response, in celebration of their newly found concord.

The comparatively impressive appearance of sequence symbolizes the large extent to which Time accommodates love's glory in friendship. Scudamour's many episodes in Book IV are one together, where his single episode in Book III is one whole. Nor does the resulting story explode itself like Guyon's, with its two incompatible origins. It is, nevertheless, illusory, *ἐκ μέρους*. To begin with, though Canto i presupposes Canto x - whence the former's introductory summary of the latter (2) - their sequence becomes unnatural on the assumption that Scudamour's wedding and Amoret's sojourn with Busirane happen in between, as has been argued in the preceding section. Yet Spenser himself gives rise to that assumption: his unique reference to the wedding follows in the same breath his summary of the conquest. True, the magician intervenes 'by way of sport' (3). This would remove the unnaturalness were it not that, with Scudamour and Amoret separated, the literal story does not bear out such a lighthearted view of the matter. The incongruity prompts the recognition that Spenser's reference must be symbolic. He does not belatedly provide a context for Amoret's plight in Book III. He means that love, in Book III glory 'not yet', glory 'masked', is even so, in Book IV, glory 'already', the marriage of Time and Eternity, with Busirane, pending its consummation, merely indulging in a mad prank. Now a symbolic wedding can only pretend to be a narrative link between Cantos x and i - and between Books IV and III. It unites them, only to prove them one in separation, as it does Scudamour and Amoret.

As for the supposed continuity between Ate's insinuations in Canto i and Scudamour's stay with Care in Canto v, let us listen to Thomas Warton:

The occult meaning of his bringing Scudamore to the house of Care ... clashes with what he had before told us. By this allegory of Scudamore's coming to Care's house, it should be understood, that 'Scudamore, from a happy, passed into a miserable state'. For we may reasonably suppose that before he came to Care's house he was unacquainted with Care; whereas the poet had before represented him as involved in extreme misery.⁵³

Quite so! But then, contrary to Warton's assumption, shared by critics generally, the episode allegorizes not the care of any one Scudamour but Care as an aspect of what Scudamour stands for. To be sure, Scudamour suffers literally from care. Grief, in the Mask of Cupid, unmistakably a personification, similarly suffers from grief (III.xii.16). It also causes grief; a fact which prompted Coleridge's acute, but unjustifiably adverse, comment that 'this confusion of agent and patient occurs so frequently in his allegorical personages that Spenser seems to have deemed it within the laws and among the legitimate principles of allegory'.⁵⁴ The symbol Grief can neither act nor suffer; metaphorically it can do either, or both. It is not as though in the Care episode Spenser laudably avoids the confusion of Coleridge's 'two incompatibles'. He simply unfolds the active and passive aspects of Care, whereas he leaves those of Grief infolded. Not that Care inflicts care on Scudamour: it harasses him with unbearable noise, raps on the head and scaldings in the side (IV.v.41, 42, 44), which mean care. Scudamour's literal care remains strangely unspecified. Only once in the entire episode does Spenser hint at any preoccupation with Britomart and Amoret:

Yet in his soundest sleepe, his dayly feare
His ydle braine gan busily molest,
And made him dreame those two disloyall were:
The things that day most minds, at night do most appeare. (43)

These lines distinguish between the dream, in which 'those two' are actually 'disloyall', and waking experience, when the active brain merely fears what in sleep, idle, it experiences as certainty. Yet

⁵³ Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, pp.109-10.

⁵⁴ Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.147.

some few stanzas earlier Scudamour had stormed into the Canto 'bent to revenge on blamelesse Britomart / The crime, which cursed Ate kindled earst' (31), utterly convinced of her guilt as in Canto i. The incongruity becomes even more striking when we see Scudamour, on his arrival at Care's cottage, intrigued, aloof, apparently as unacquainted with Care as Warton would have him:

Sir Scudamour there entring, much admired
The manner of their worke and wearie paine;
And having long beheld, at last enquired
The cause and end thereof: but all in vaine. (38)

We must read allegorically. Love qua friendship (Scudamour) is Care without cause, if without end, and thus already beyond Care. Alternatively, it is Care unmasking itself as a mere nightmare, even though to leave you still somewhat shaken:

With that, the wicked carle the maister Smith
A paire of redwhot yron tongs did take
Out of the burning cinders, and therewith
Under his side him nipt, that forst to wake,
He felt his hart for very paine to quake,
And started up avenged for to be
On him, the which his quiet slomber brake:
Yet looking round about him none could see;
Yet did the smart remaine, though he himselfe did flee. (44)

Coleridge, with his characteristic crazed perceptiveness, got at least part of the point:

At night, and in sleep, cares are not only doubly burdensome, but some matters, that then seem to us sources of great anxiety, are not so in fact; and when we are thoroughly awake, and in possession of all our faculties, they really ⁵⁵ seem nothing, and we wonder at the influence they have had over us.

In his excitement he may not have seen that the poet blithely refers to Scudamour's 'soundest sleepe' and 'quiet slomber'. While ordinary readers are taken aback by such apparent mindlessness, the 'higher' Spenser criticism remains (wilfully) obtuse. We conclude that Scudamour's experience is too self-contradictory to qualify as an event: it symbolizes glory 'already-not yet', with the emphasis on 'already', because of the theme of Book IV.

⁵⁵ See Collier's delightful story, as printed in Variorum IV, 198.

The underlined verses in stanza 44 mean that Care's disturbance of Scudamour's sleep leaves him with uncertain and unverifiable 'jealous dread' (45), not that it derives from and forces him back upon any waking obsession with Ate's revelation. So his continuation of 'his former voiage' (46), in the certainty of Britomart's guilt, does not follow on from Canto v. But neither does it follow on from Canto i, supposing we could just ignore the Care episode in order to save the story. For in Canto i he does not set off in pursuit of Britomart but turns upon Glauce instead. We do not hear of any designs against Britomart until his re-emergence in Canto v, which offers no explanation for the new course of his vengeance and, moreover, presents as counterproductive Glauce's attempts to make him see reason which, in Canto i, are said to have proved ultimately effective and thus earn her the lofty comparison with Orpheus, David and Menenius Agrippa in the opening stanzas of Canto ii. Nor does Spenser describe Scudamour's search for Britomart. His grand encounter with her in Canto vi, while apparently its intended culmination, is entirely accidental. It results from his chance meeting with Artegall, who happens to bear a grudge against Britomart himself. Indeed, 'results' is saying too much, for Artegall, so far from actively seeking out Britomart, passively waits in the woods so that he may attack this 'stranger knight ... When ever he this way shall passe by day or night' (5). That she comes his way at all, and that at once, is purely fortuitous. And then, how can Artegall's reference to her 'Hebene speare' identify her for Scudamour? As far as we can tell, he has never seen her wield it or, indeed, a spear of any description. And the epithet 'Hebene' is peculiar to IV.v (8, 20): elsewhere the spear is, if anything, 'enchanted'.

Let us see if the grand encounter itself will survive scrutiny as narrative. It is awkward that Scudamour attacks Britomart without stating his grievance, so that she has no opportunity to undeceive him by voluntarily revealing her sex. But perhaps this could be accounted for 'naturalistically' by invoking his blind fury, due to his (curiously intermittent) certainty of her guilt. What passes credibility, however, is that he should address her as 'Sir' (34) after the revelation of her sex; a revelation which affects him so powerfully (24, 28) that it could not possibly have slipped from his

mind. Nor is the address simply a slip of the pen on Spenser's part, for Britomart herself clearly reassumes the role of Amoret's male lover, here,

Ne ever was there wight to me more deare
Then she, ne unto whom I more true love did beare, (35)

as also in Canto ix, where, again in Scudamour's presence, she speaks of her painful search for 'my former love ... that gentle maide' after having been addressed by Arthur as 'sir Knight' (38, 37). Scudamour now tolerates and accepts as his search companion one who openly professes to be a rival lover. How could he, even if he should no longer believe Ate? Are we to insist, with supreme indifference to the actual text, that really he must know Britomart's true sex? If so, can we accept the corollary that Spenser has written an exemplum of agonizing jealousy due, trivially and most untypically, to mistaken sexual identity? How could we be morally enlightened by the knowledge that Scudamour's anxiety happens to be much ado about nothing? Only if we interpret symbolically: the Legend of Friendship minimizes the significance of Time even as it still clouds the glory of love. Amoret's fearfulness and Britomart's dubious behaviour (i.5, 7), Blandamour's taunts to Scudamour - 'so hast thou to thy selfe false honour often wonne' (44), 'thy vaine boast, and spoile of love misgotten' (51) - and Scudamour's vulnerability to Ate, 'delusion', are so many reminders that, for the Time being, love cannot manifest its essential glory. That is why Glauce 'sufferance desired, / Till time the tryall of her truth expyred' (54). Yet we are never in doubt that Amoret's fears are unfounded, that Britomart means well, that Blandamour does not deserve credit. And Scudamour proves more than a match for Paridell. Whereas in III.xi-xii 'not yet' obscures 'already', in IV.i 'already' outshines 'not yet'. Canto vi conveys the same emphasis. Though Britomart cannot register as woman, glory,⁵⁶ Scudamour takes 'him' on trust as Amoret's lover - not as a literal rival, which would be absurd, but as a complementary embodiment of his own meaning. Nor are they ever separated again in Book IV, as they were almost at once in Book III, by the flaming porch of Busirane's castle.

⁵⁶ See p.39.

The developments during their joint search for Amoret leave something to be desired as narrative. Granted, it makes sequential sense for the quarrelsome quartet to remember Britomart as having 'shamefully fordonne' them in Satyrane's tournament - or at least for Blandamour: Druon and Claribell are not mentioned by name in Canto iv, and who shall say whether even Paridell, who earlier on in the Book wisely shuns an encounter with Britomart (i.34-35), was among the 'full many others ... likewise dismounted' (iv.46)? But had Britomart 'eke the famous prize of beauty from them wonne' (ix.28)? Theoretically, yes (v.20). But she had refused the snowy Florimell, whom the cestus would not fit and who preferred Braggadochio anyway. Why should the knights interrupt their pursuit of false Florimell (v.28, ix.24) even more than they are doing already by attacking Britomart as well as each other? After all, she is not responsible for her disappearance. Indeed, she could be said to have ingratiated herself with them by renouncing her rightful claims (v.21). To match this incongruity we have Britomart's statement to Arthur that she has lost Amoret as a result of the tournament and the beauty contest (ix.38). This is literally untrue, since in v.29 she rides off with Amoret for companion. She does not indicate any such causal connection in vi.35-36; nor does Spenser, in vii.3-4.

As for Scudamour's tale, it does not really suit its occasion. How can he tell the climactic story of how he once conquered Amoret without reflecting ruefully on his present forlorn condition? Also, this story does not seem calculated to stabilize good relations, since it rubs in the notion of his glorious achievement, the very cause of Blandamour's hatred. Of course, Scudamour does not force it upon his audience: it is they who ask for it. And they specifically want to hear 'all that adventure which [he] did assay / For that faire Ladies love' (ix.40). Its pervasive note of triumph might simply reflect the scope of their request. Moreover, Claribell realizes that this request imposes 'so sad a taske'. 'Nessun maggior dolore / che ricordarsi del tempo felice / nella miseria'.⁵⁷ But then, why do they make it at all? If they are intent on sealing the reconciliation, they should not prod Scudamour's wound.

⁵⁷ Inferno V.121-23.

Presumably their request implies that they, including Blandamour, are ready to accept the tale's truth. Spenser does not say so, though, and refrains from giving their reactions. Indeed, he refrains from continuing Scudamour's story altogether; for good, so far as we can see, thus leaving it oddly suspended. We should be eager to prove the scene a non-event. Scudamour says, helpfully:

For from the first that I her love profest,
Unto this houre, this present lucklesse howre,
I never joyed happinesse nor rest. (39)

If this is true, he cannot go on to tell about any past 'safe' conquest of Amoret. Yet he does precisely that. And note the crowning absurdity. When Britomart and Scudamour voice their complaints about having lost Amoret, she must be in their very presence, for she is with Arthur (20). If, as Lewis thinks, Spenser intended to re-use the original ending of Book III, with its rapturous union of Scudamour and Amoret, this would have been the place to do so. Upton feels that we should make good the poet's omission.⁵⁸ He ought to have wondered why the poet did not do so himself. Spenser both generates and thwarts the compulsion to supply the happy ending so that we may infer that the manoeuvre would be superfluous: Amoret's as yet unnoticed proximity to Scudamour already means what their Hermaphroditic embrace also means. The difference in intensity between the two scenes corresponds to the relative position of the Middle Books' quests, unfolded in 1596, infolded in 1590.

(ii) At the Temple

Scudamour's story in Canto x has generally been regarded as a courtship rather than as a quest, even though literally it looks like a quest, while Scudamour refers to it as such: 'this same brave emprise' (4), 'that hard adventure' (5). One can see how the mistake has arisen. The story occupies only one out of twelve Cantos. It is obviously allegorical. And it apparently leads up to the wedding in IV.i.2. Also, it seems to be an exponent of the familiar genre whose mainspring is the 13th century French Roman de la Rose, which, according to C.S.Lewis's influential reading, presents, by means of personifications, the love story of two people, the dreamer and the lady. This will not do. Lewis is rightly struck by the contrast

⁵⁸ Variorum IV, 215-16.

between the 'presence' of the personifications and the virtual 'absence' of dreamer and lady. But his account of it reflects not so much the Roman itself as his comparison of it with 'a curious little dialogue [by] Mr. Aldous Huxley', which he declares to be 'the best preparation for a study of Guillaume de Lorris' - astonishingly, in view of his more-than-one-hundred-page endeavour to get 'courtly love' and 'allegory' into a proper historical focus. 'In the first place [the poet] practically abolishes the hero, as one of his dramatis personae, by reducing him to the colourless teller of the tale. The whole poem is in the first person and we look through the lover's eyes, not at him. In the second place he removes the heroine entirely. Her character is distributed among personifications'. Where, pray, do we see Guillaume doing any such thing? How do we know that what is not there has been abolished or removed? And why should we undo Guillaume's labours of annihilation? We had better stick with the rose and 'I' - whom, incidentally, there is little point in calling 'dreamer' or 'narrator', since the narrated dream is co-extensive with the poem: there are no waking experiences or other people. Now 'rose' and 'I' are not persons emptied out but personifications (of 'cunnus' and 'will'). If, as Lewis correctly observes, 'you cannot really have the lady, and, say, the lady's Pride, walking about on the same stage as though they were entities on the same plane', that stage will not support a lover either, no matter how residual. Anyway, the Roman is too exhaustive and too schematic an account of courting to qualify as the story of individual lovers. One would be hard put to it to extract a single, intelligibly motivated development. Speech and action of the personifications supposedly representing the lovers' progress suggest self-definition rather than interaction. Their liveliness and occasional verisimilitude cannot make them persons. Moreover, Lewis sees perfectly well that not all the personifications qualify as moods of lover and lady. He ought to have questioned his conception of Guillaume's fiction, instead of rushing to the conclusion that the poet's execution is flawed.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Allegory of Love, p.117, 118, 118, 119. Probably no single post-Lewis reading holds the field today. I have learnt some sense from John V. Fleming, The 'Roman de la Rose': A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton, 1969).

In so far as Spenser's Temple of Venus episode represents the genre of the Roman, it resists the Lewis approach even more than does the Roman itself, on precisely the same grounds. Let us take them in reverse order. The 'bevie of fayre damzels', Womanhood, Shamefastnesse, Cherefulnesse, Modestie, Curtesie, Silence, Obedience, can hardly represent a succession of attitudes that Amoret adopts towards Scudamour, since the poet crowds them together in a small space and places Amoret 'in the midst of them' (48-52). They cannot even be regarded as an analysis of a single, complex attitude, for Amoret is not in fact cheerful, nor unhesitatingly obedient, nor silent when Scudamour leads her away (55-57). Similarly, Love and Hate are too patently contrasting abstractions to symbolize stages in Amoret's feelings (32-36). And Lewis's decision that Daunger, while signifying 'danger' in III.xii.11, stands for 'refusal, or difficult granting, of love' in IV.x.17 begs the question.⁶⁰ How could such an attitude involve 'hatred, murther, treason, and despight ... in ambushment ... awayting to entrap the warelesse wight' (20)? These unfold 'danger', rather. Besides, Scudamour's adventure, so far from being a series of spontaneous, unexpected actions that show a developing strategy reflecting the whims of his lady, has all the orderliness of a prefabricated ritual. It is literally mapped out for him, and he could almost be said to tick off its various stages as a matter of routine. On its own, small, scale it is, if anything, more exhaustive and schematic than the Roman. Moreover, since persons and personifications could not possibly interact, Spenser's hero and heroine must be personifications, just like the other characters. For example, we do not see Scudamour coming to grips with his own doubt or dispelling somebody else's: we see him forcing the porter Doubt to give way by the display of his shield. So he cannot be a person; unless 'Doubt' should be a nickname for George (12-14). But with his 'double face' the porter classifies himself so evidently with what Joseph Spence calls 'ridiculous imaginations'⁶¹ that he has no serious claims to personhood.

⁶⁰ Allegory of Love, Appendix II, pp.364-66.

⁶¹ - in his catalogue of 'The Defects of our Modern Poets in their Allegories, Instanced from Spenser's Faerie Queene'; see Critical Anthology, ed. Alpers, p.100.

Scudamour and Amoret are perhaps less apt to create the impression of being abolished than are the Roman's alleged protagonists. Yet, as in the Busirane episode, they are not really 'there'. Amoret figures only in the last few stanzas. And these do not explain her reluctance to leave the Temple in terms of any negative response to her captor. As for Scudamour, his prominence is vacuous, in that the sheer objectiveness of his tale swamps him as a 'consciousness'. Instead of thinking all the time of the prize to be won, he seems to savour the several stages of his adventure for their own sake. His dealings with his antagonists are effortless and leisurely, without any gradual building up of tension as, approaching his goal, he finds yet more obstacles or detractions. Even the sight of Amoret herself occasions not a lover's awe-struck or enraptured awareness of the presence of 'the other' but a fleeting, impersonal uneasiness about the adventure's propriety:

Whom soone as I beheld, my hart gan throb,
And wade in doubt, what best were to be donne:
For sacrilege me seem'd the Church to rob,
And folly seem'd to leave the thing undonne,
Which with so strong attempt I had begonne. (53)

Nor, of course, does he respond at all to Amoret's entreaties: he carries her off as though she were an inanimate object. One would have to sympathize with those who find him culpably masterful, were it not that his obliviousness of Amoret is all-pervasive. Yet the 'negative presence' of the protagonists here does not even excuse, as in the Roman, treating them as people exteriorized in the personifications. For not only do these not qualify as moods or attitudes, as we have already noted: they are also notably perfunctory, lacking the vividness and enargeia that mark so many of the Roman's characters.

So even qua mini-Roman Canto x is not the prelude to a marriage. The generic similarity implies that Scudamour cannot really be a narrator any more than Guillaume's I. Literally he does, of course, adopt that role at the end of Canto ix. But even if he should be a person there, he could not conceivably start reminiscing about previous exploits as a personification. Also, Scudamour's exordium contains two mutually exclusive estimations of his situation at the time of

telling his tale, so that there could not be any such thing. In stanza 1 he repeats the burden of his complaint in ix.39:

For since the day that first with deadly wound
My heart was launcht, and learned to have loved,
I never joyed howre, but still with care was moved.

This might seem an accurate, if exaggerated, expression of his present mood. However, it contradicts, logically as well as psychologically, not only the positive drift of his tale but already his statement in stanza 2 that

all that ever yet I have endured,
I count as naught, and tread downe under feet,
Since of my love at length I rest assured,
That to disloyalty she will not be allured.

His loss of Amoret makes such confidence unwarranted. He might have said this immediately after his conquest, before he met Ate. But it is no good thinking up a more credible context than the one Spenser in fact provides. As it is Scudamour's references to his situation actually desituate him. They introduce not the condition of the narrator but the meaning of the tale - very properly, for an exordium. We have here the preliminary definition of the tale's theme: love even while perpetual care also, thanks to 'grace ... given from above', assurance of its consummation 'at length', in Eternity. Through the order of the two stanzas and Scudamour's bold anticipation of a retrospective vantage point Spenser focusses love in Time as glory 'already', friendship.

Scudamour's tale proper may seem positive to the point of lacking any negative qualification. Or are we to supply the fateful wedding? By no means. The appearance is deceptive. We cannot, as in real stories, detach the action from the setting and summarize it as 'Scudamour tries to get Amoret, and succeeds'. To begin with, not only are they not individual lovers but, unlike I and the rose in the Roman, their relation, even as personifications, is not one of purposive drive as against object of that drive. They are equivalent personifications, whom this Canto polarizes as purpose and goal in the same sense in which Canto v polarizes Care and Scudamour as agent and patient. Moreover - and this is another crucial difference from the Roman - the narrative does not symbolize anything remotely like

'plucking the rose'. We must guard against mistaking the vehicle for the tenor; a vehicle which, qua story, is, if anything, a knightly quest rather than an amorous adventure anyway. Scudamour and Amoret are defined, independently but similarly, through the setting. They are both oriented towards, and almost infold into, the androgynous Venus behind the veil. The goddess, too, almost manifests her true self. The veil is 'slender'. Her legs are joined by the self-devouring serpent of Eternity (40). She stands upon an altar of 'costly', if still 'brickle', material - 'likest glasse', 'yet glasse was not', as though already transcending the fabric of Panthea (I.x.58).

And all about her necke and shoulders flew
A flocke of litle loves, and sports, and joyes,
With nimble wings of gold and purple hew;
Whose shapes seem'd not like to terrestriall boyes,
But like to Angels playing heavenly toyes;
The whilest their eldest brother was away,
Cupid their eldest brother; he enjoyes
The wide kingdome of love with Lordly sway,
And to his law compels all creatures to obey. (42)

Heaven shines through. Cupid reigns, without explicit reference to any cruelty. Only the multiplicity of his younger brothers, and the streaks of purple in their wings,⁶² gently hint how he is nevertheless still 'away'. Amoret is specified by the 'bevie of fayre damzels'. Womanhood, Shamefastnesse, Cherefulnessse, Modestie, Curtesie, Silence and Obedience all take the sting out of separateness. Gathered closely together they hardly unfold Venus. Now Spenser conveys exactly the same meaning through Scudamour and Amoret together, united by consent of Venus in her innermost sanctuary but in a union as yet to be lived out beyond its precincts, safely in the midst of danger (58). We must not regard Amoret's reluctance to follow Scudamour, with Hiatt, as an implicit indictment of his character. Roche's assertion that 'Scudamour's keckheit is not culpable but absolutely requisite for his task' is fully justified. Not so his bland conviction that 'from this initial discord of the lovers will grow their love', which piously emasculates the actual text.⁶³ Amoret's reluctance to leave the Temple equals Scudamour's reluctance 'the Church to rob' (53). Even as friendship love still faces Time.

⁶² Compare p.42.

⁶³ Kindly Flame, p.129, n.42; p.133.

Consistently conceptual reading bears out the adequacy of the Legend's title as half-hearted de-allegorisation does not. Thus, in an effort to do justice both to the supposed story of Scudamour and Amoret and to the unmistakable theme of concord, Roche, who calls the Canto 'an emblematic exemplum of the theme of discordia concors in a courtship', finds himself claiming that sex is 'subordinated to the non-physical aspects of love, to love as it appears in society' because Spenser names the pairs of friends but not the pairs of lovers (25-27).⁶⁴ Even supposing that, as Lewis also says, the episode concerns 'love as a conventional social form', 'Nature and Art in happy symbiosis',⁶⁵ one might wonder how sex, the constitutive factor of that love, could be subordinated. In what way are the non-physical aspects of love not sexual? How is love as it appears in society non-physical? Be that as it may, the subordination could not without incongruity be proclaimed by Scudamour, allegedly in the very process of seeking to make Amoret his bed-fellow. Nor could this proclamation take the form of extolling male friendship. For this is not a socialisation of sexual love. In fact Scudamour quietly identifies himself with the lover who, in a great Lucretian passage, addresses Venus as the genius not only of natural harmony but of generation (43-48). If there is to be subordination at all, one would have to side with Lewis, rather, who asserts that 'friends are found to be merely "another sort of lovers"' (26).⁶⁶ But then, 'merely' does not appear in Spenser's text, whether literally or by implication. Since sexual lovers are mentioned before male friends, Scudamour's indefinite envy of 'their endlesse happinesse', mentioned subsequently, cannot apply specifically to the former. Anyway, Lewis's statement is illogical. Unlike Spenser, he uses 'love' to mean 'married sexual love'. The love of male friends, presented emphatically as non-sexual in the very stanza he quotes from, could not possibly be a subcategory of that.

These tangles can be avoided. Scudamour is a personification, so that we need not take him any more as exemplifying sexual love, apparently to the exclusion of male friendship. Moreover, friendship is not male companionship but christian अङ्ग, a virtue indifferent to

⁶⁴ Kindly Flame, p.129, 131.

⁶⁵ Images, p.45.

⁶⁶ Allegory of Love, p.339.

sex: it includes erotic love. St Paul uses ἀγάπη both in a general sense for the love of the brethren and, specifically, in injunctions to husbands to love their wives.⁶⁷ He means not that they should complement or temper their sexual passion, presumed present, by some sort of sublimated love, social or mystic, but that their sexual passion should be an expression of ἀγάπη. Otherwise it would be lust, whether powerful or subordinated. (Accordingly Lust appears in the Legend of Friendship, as pseudo-ἀγάπη, not in the Legend of Chastity.) Spenser does emphasize the virtue's sexual aspect: not through the story, an illusory vehicle, but through the lover's hymn to Venus genetrix, the Canto's conceptual pivot, in relation to which Scudamour and Amoret are defined. Nor does the poet tilt the balance without reason. As we have seen, chastity, heavenly love 'not yet', checks generation, Time's unfolding of Man. Therefore friendship, to be heavenly love 'already', must be more than a remedial virtue, repairing the damage done by generation by binding together separate human beings. It actually presides over the process of multiplication, turning it into Man's coherent expansion to fill out the number of his destiny.

Let us now go through the Canto to make sure of the illusoriness of the, appropriately, strong appearance of internal sequence. The 'background' of the story readily segments it. The greater part, from the twenty-first up to but not including the last stanza, is set 'within the compasse of that Islands space', with 'right in the midst the Goddess self'.⁶⁸ The ten stanzas preceding this segment and the one following it are set on the bridge connecting the island with the mainland. Scudamour's first action, the defeat of the twenty knights and the winning of the shield, takes place on the mainland itself (7-10). One might think that both these knights and Doubt, Delay and Daunger, who man the bridge, are simply obstacles trying to prevent access or, failing that, to hamper progress. But this is to miss the point. As for the knights, their 'office was, against all manner wights / By all meanes to maintaine that castels ancient rights'. Only shoddy reading translates this as 'no entry'. The castle

⁶⁷ e.g. Ephesians 5.25 and Colossians 3.19.

⁶⁸ stanzas 21-38 (18) / 39 / stanzas 40-57 (18).

'warded all which in or out did wend' (7). This suggests regular traffic across the bridge. The reference might be to, say, routine food supplies. Nothing warrants this specification, though. What the 'ancient rights' are is not said explicitly, but one infers that they include a positive invitation to enter to those who can win the shield:

Blessed be the man that well can use his bliss:
Whose ever be the shield, faire Amoret be his. (8)

This, the pillar's inscription, could easily be mistaken for a trap, since we learn that the shield was 'of many sought in vaine'. On this view Scudamour would be an unforeseen exception, putting a stop to an evil practice. The true interpretation is less perverse. 'Many sought in vaine' - but love, transcending multiplicity as 'many one',⁶⁹ succeeds by definition. And are we not made to take Scudamour's success for granted? After all, we have known him from the first as the possessor of the shield (III.xi.7). Indeed, his name derives from it. Now, as the inscription implies, the winning of the shield guarantees the conquest of Amoret. Therefore it cannot really be the first in a genuine sequence of entry tests, as though Scudamour could still fail later on. He does not need the shield as a means. It is a prize. Only he cannot have it as a trophy 'hangd on high with golden ribbands laced', just as he cannot remain with Amoret in the Temple.

As for Doubt, Delay and Daunger, who certainly try to impede Scudamour's progress, they contradict the function of the bridge, a passage way (6). On the incorrect assumption that they represent the attitude of an individual Amoret, this would be a forbidding attitude. Hence, whether genuine or pretended, it could not possibly be the bridge to her heart. Scudamour overcomes the three without changing their dispositions - of course, since they are personifications anchored in their meanings. On the psychological approach this could only mean that he rapes Amoret's (apparent) feelings: hardly an exploit to be recounted proudly in public. However, it is strange on any approach that further obstructions should be put in the way of someone who has just qualified for entrance. Anyway, they would not be further obstructions, because the battle with the twenty knights has already, literally, put in doubt, delayed and endangered Scudamour's access. Sequential reading does not make sense.

⁶⁹ See p.100.

Conceptual reading does. Friendship is already manifestly Time's bridge to Eternity - a bridge, though not quite Eternity itself, owing to the condition of separateness, which inevitably entails Doubt, Delay and Daunger.

Since the bridge is a metaphor, Scudamour does not enter heaven after crossing it. The warning may be in order, for the island is notably paradisiacal. Indeed, Scudamour 'thought there was none other heaven then this' (28). This phrasing puts us on our guard, though. Red Cross, too, 'weened well, / That great Cleopolis ... The fairest Citie was, that might be seene' (I.x.58). And Spenser himself says of the Garden of Adonis: 'Well I wote by tryall, that this same / All other pleasant places doth excell' (III.vi.29). Red Cross recognizes his mistake. And Spenser expects us to realize that he did not, of course, 'try' heaven. Scudamour does not retract his interpretation. Probably, though, few have followed him in his error. On the contrary, most readers, assuming that his words are loosely hyperbolic, will not sense any error at all. They take it that he finds the island literally wonderful. Moreover, they take it that we are to share his enthusiasm, as though the scene were the poet's idealized picture of friendship in a harmonious setting. But are we? Could Spenser really be urging us to dedicate ourselves to a perpetual stroll through an actualized locus amoenus? Is friendship only for those with estates and no work on their hands? And how about the English climate? Anyway, what is so attractive about a place where 'thousand payres of lovers walkt ... Ne ever ought but of their true loves talkt' (25)? Let us not credit Spenser with such imbecile dreams and pretend that they charm and morally rejuvenate us. The scene multiplies couples of lovers and friends in order to symbolize union in togetherness reaching out to embrace all. Scudamour's interpretation makes explicit the heavy emphasis on glory 'already'. The setting, while supporting this emphasis, highlights the qualification, 'almost'. In ἀγάνη grace transforms nature beyond recognition: 'All which by nature made did nature selfe amaze' (24). But nature has not yet vanished. Nor has it been restored to pre-lapsarian splendour: 'Art playing second natures part' supplies 'all that nature did omit' (21). The Island Paradise is an aspect of the Power of Bliss.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Compare p.34.

Scudamour does not retract his interpretation: he enacts its denial. Implicitly he razes the Paradise as Guyon does the Bower. His presence there, 'already', belies its message, in that, without Amoret, he is the odd one out. Moreover, the story leads one to expect that, on his return with Amoret, he will join the happy couples. He can hardly have changed his mind. Why, then, does he never mention the Paradise again? Has it mysteriously disappeared? If so, why does he not register surprise and disappointment? Surely he himself dispels it, in virtue of what he stands for. And with it he dispels the story. The sacrifice remains implicit because, while harrowing to temperance, it is almost painless to friendship. It could be dismissed as an interpreter's fantasy if Scudamour had not been more clearly disruptive inside the Temple, actively and passively. Literally 'past all perill' (21), in that he has left Daunger behind on the bridge, he nevertheless seeks Amoret 'through paines and perlous jeopardie' (28). In the Temple porch he is 'halfe dismayed' (36); strangely, for a knight who has dauntlessly unseated twenty adversaries and mastered the bridge without any misgivings, especially because Love and Concord restrain Hate for him: he does not have to lift a finger in his own defence. Once inside he associates himself with 'great sorts of lovers piteously complayning' (43). His shield, 'on which the winged boy in colours cleare / Depeincted was' (III.xi.7), undergoes a frightening transformation, to reveal 'Cupid with his killing bow / And cruell shafts' (IV.x.55). And, of course, he 'robs the church' of Amoret, leading her into Daunger. In survey Scudamour's role looks so ominously 'not yet' that one hastens to plunge it back into context. His envy of the couples in their Paradise, his fear of Hate, the plight of his fellow lovers and his heartfelt amen to their spokesman's complaint get a stanza or less each only, while the complaint is in fact a hymn apart from the last line: 'O graunt that of my love at last I may not misse' (47). Even the fateful abduction of Amoret takes place under the benign auspices of a laughing Venus. The meaning of the episode agrees with its impact qua narrative: Scudamour triumphant. That the triumph is, as yet, ἐκ μέρους goes almost unnoticed, like the non-Aristotelian rationale of the fiction.

I The Flashback

(i) Canto ii

If Scudamour's apparent story is unreal, that of Britomart, with which his intersects at so many points, must be unreal too. However, hers contains his as a mere strand. And her changing relationship with Artegall, from search in Book III through discovery in Book IV to rescue in Book V, strongly suggests genuine sequence. So a logical shortcut will not carry conviction.¹ To explode the Britomart narrative this chapter examines her two great Artegall episodes, in Books IV and V. And since the former is also one of her two great Scudamour episodes, we shall reconsider the other, in Book III, from her angle. But first we must attend to the flashback (III.ii.17 - iii.62), which contributes most to the illusion that she has a developing love story, just as the illusion of Arthur's purposeful advance through the several Books derives largely from the recollection of his erotic dream (I.ix.8-15). The flashback consists of three sections, the mirror scene, the consultation of Merlin, and the departure for Faeryland. These do not even constitute a continuous mini-story. Instead they introduce in small compass the three temporal aspects of eternal one-ness, which the Legends of Chastity, Friendship and Justice embody on a large scale.

Long ago Merritt Y. Hughes called the mirror scene a 'prelude of sentiment and idealism' to Britomart's love story, 'indispensable for Spenser'.² Modern interpreters, mindful of the teachings of the New Critics, are careful not to profess any such insight into the poet's psychological make-up, or at least to disguise it respectably by submerging the author's mind into the collective unconscious. Yet one wonders whether the basic response to the passage has changed as much as critical sophistication and a literary theoretical volte-face suggest. The two critics who have addressed themselves most directly to the problem of defining Spenser's non-novelistic

¹ Compare p.54, 76.

² Variorum III, 334.

fiction treat the scene very much as though it were indeed the prelude to a real love story. C.S.Lewis concedes that 'occasionally, of course, he makes a very brief approach to the kind of fiction now valued in the novel: the conversation between the lovesick Britomart and her nurse, for example'. According to him Spenser presents Britomart's looking in the mirror to see her future husband as 'the ordinary action of a normal woman'.³ Alpers would have us adopt towards Britomart the attitude of experienced middle age, smiling in sympathy with a girl profoundly discomfited by the pangs of first love, patting her reassuringly on the back in the knowledge that 'her feelings are perfectly natural' and that 'she will finally meet her lover'.⁴ Perhaps the episode does invite the kind of distanced empathy commonly required of novel readers. However, we must respect Spenser's presentation of his heroine's plight. We are not entitled to normalize and domesticate it as these critics do. It is by no means natural for Britomart to see her future lover in a mirror:

By straunge occasion she did him behold,
And much more strangely gan to love his sight. (18)

True, she seems to believe as a matter of course that the mirror will reveal 'whom fortune for her husband would allot' (21). But Spenser's emphatic reiteration implies that magic cannot be taken for granted. We might regard her action as the courtly counterpart of a regular Celtic folk custom, as described, for instance, in Mary O'Holleran's reminiscences of girlhood scenes with Nora Barnacle in Galway:

we would steal a head of cabbage out of a garden we never stood in before on a moonlight night on Hallow eve and have a mirror we would go into a field and stand on a dunghill and eat the head of cabbage and looking through the mirror to see if we could see the face of our future husband ...⁵

Not surprisingly we do not learn that Nora actually saw the portrait of the artist that she was to marry. Again, it is by no means natural for Britomart, supposing she has simply fallen in love, to insist that her predicament is unique and irremediable:

³ Images, p.113, 105.

⁴ Poetry, p.394, also 183-84.

⁵ Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (London, 1959; rpt.1966), p.164.

neither God of love, nor God of sky
Can doe (said she) that, which cannot be done,
For no no usuall fire, no usuall rage
It is, O Nurse, which on my life doth feed (36, 37)

- hardly the words of your typical teenage lass. Nor is it natural for Glauce to attempt to exorcize the passion through magical rites, which, ineffectual though they are, the seriousness of the situation forbids us to take as a grotesque comedy of superstition. Lewis and Alpers have perpetrated a critical crime: they distort the scene's tonal and atmospheric impact, neutralizing its mystery and fatefulness out of existence.

This ironying out, so to speak, of local texture clearly results from the conviction that there is a real, continuing Britomart-Artegall love story, presided over by an ultimately benign Providence offering the cue for the reader's stance. Prompted by the 'impossibility' of the magical event critics treat it as a symbol only to make it mean incipient love as part of a story. Thus Nelson:

despite its magical trappings, the process Spenser describes is real enough. Love begins, he is saying, not at first sight, but with an envisagement of what the beloved should be. This envisagement depends, in turn, upon the nature of the lover himself ... The ideal having been imagined, the lover must then find its fleshly counterpart.⁶

Alternatively, MacCaffrey:

love's consummation ensues upon the recognition of the beloved as he is, not as a projection of desire. When [Britomart] falls in love with Artégall, he exists for her only in the "world of glass" that is Merlin's mirror. Loving this "shade", she lives in the world of imagination, and that ... is ... a kind of death ... Britomart must pull herself away from the self-regarding world of glass and enter the world of actual men and women.

Both quotations, contradictory as they are in their valuation of the mirror, illustrate to perfection the pernicious inbreeding of vehicle and tenor that has been the bane of Spenser studies. Britomart does not 'envisage' or 'project' Artégall before she meets him in the flesh (how could she conjure up an identifying image - IV.vi.26 - of a person she does not know, anyway?): she literally sees him in a

⁶ Poetry, p.232.

⁷ Anatomy, pp.299-300.

mirror. This mirror might conceivably symbolize the imagination. It could not possibly symbolize Britomart's imagination, though. People use their faculties; they do not consult symbols of them (or, for that matter, of anything else. Thus to say that 'the looking glasse ... is not a mirror ... but a "glassie globe" ... which signifies fragile marital harmony in Renaissance iconography (Panofsky, 1962, 162)' is to make a useless, if learned, assertion, as well as a false denial.⁸). If its extraordinary properties make the mirror a symbol, Britomart must be a symbol too. As such she cannot have a love life, except metaphorically.

Britomart's apparent initiation into love may be peculiar and untypical; Spenser's rationale for her distress is strictly unintelligible. It is not Artegall's miraculous appearance in the mirror that bowls her over (see 26). Neither does the experience of love per se disturb her, to judge from her rejection of Glauce's diagnosis, 'aye me, how much I feare, least love it bee' (33). Nor does she appear to be apprehensive about the character and inclinations of Artegall, whom, after all, she does not know, or dismayed at the prospect of having to search for him. Instead she despairs because 'th'only shade and semblant of a knight ... Hath me subjected to loves cruell law' (38). This is extraordinary. Mirrors, even magical mirrors, produce images, not substances, or they would not be mirrors. She cannot logically expect anything else. Is she, perhaps, suddenly overcome by doubts about the existence of the image's corresponding reality, in view of Glauce's consoling admonition that 'no shadow, but a bodie hath in powre' (45)? She never says so. And her self-deprecation, 'I fonder, then Cephisus foolish child ... I fonder love a shade, the bodie farre exild' (44), makes sense only if she assumes that the substance does exist. Besides, Glauce does not mean that there is a body but, as the phrase 'hath in powre' indicates, that the appearance of the shadow guarantees the body's discovery. She merely reminds Britomart of the mirror's magical control of the future, in which the girl had implicit faith when she might have been entirely skeptical. The mirror's performance can only have strengthened this faith. And since it presents a

⁸ The Faerie Queene, ed. Hamilton, p.320, n.18.8.

picture of what promises to be an admirable knight, who does not fail to take her fancy, her anguished response seems not just premature but utterly gratuitous. We have here a stark incongruity that eludes sympathetic understanding and offers no scope even for paternal drooling.

The poet's explanation of Britomart's predicament, as explicitly formulated by herself, leaves one blank with incomprehension. However, alert scrutiny of the actual text discovers a more intelligible, if only implicit, alternative. The mirror was made by Merlin not to reveal to girls their future lovers but

to shew in perfect sight
What ever thing was in the world contaynd ...
What ever foe had wrought, or frend had faynd,
Therein discovered was. (19)

The magician gave it to king Ryence

for his gard,
That never foes his kingdome might invade,
But he it knew at home before he hard
Tydings thereof, and so them still debar'd. (21)

As a matter of fact Britomart does not make for the mirror with the set purpose of finding out whom she will marry. She comes upon it accidentally ('it fortun'd'), looks in it casually ('her selfe a while therein she vewd in vaine'), and then, reminding herself of its powers, watches more carefully to see what 'mote to her selfe pertaine' (22) - which is notably unspecific. If, in the next stanza, her curiosity becomes specifically marital, it is not because sex asserts itself but because traditionally marriage determines a girl's whole future, stamping it with the character, status and occupation of her husband:

Not that she lusted after any one;
For she was pure from blame of sinfull blot,
Yet wist her life at last must lincke in that same knot.

Now if the mirror was fabricated for the express purpose of revealing hostile projects, one must infer that Artegall is not just Britomart's destined bridegroom but an enemy to Ryence's kingdom. Spenser's ironic congratulation of Ryence with the possession of Merlin's present, 'happie this Realme, had it remained ever since' (21), even suggests Deheubarth's doom. Hence Britomart's profound distress.

This reading derives support from the poet's sources. It is a commonplace of Spenser criticism that Britomart and Artegall are broadly modelled on Ariosto's Bradamante and Ruggiero. These characters are not simply lovers: they are champions of different nations engaged in a religious war. Their commitment to each other is acutely at odds with their commitment to their respective leaders, Charlemagne and Agramante. Spenser's borrowing from his Italian predecessor could be meant to signal a similar complication in the love of Britomart and Artegall. And there is another, even more telling analogue. According to Hughes 'Spenser's greatest single debt to Virgil is his story of Glaucé and Britomart in Book iii, canto 2. His source was the Ciris'.⁹ He contents himself with listing similarities in wording and characterisation. It never occurs to him to wonder why Spenser should have echoed so unmistakably a passage from this (pseudo-)Virgilian poem. Had he done so, he would have realized that as a whole it forms a most illuminating matrix. Ciris tells of Scylla's fateful love for Minos, the Cretan king besieging Megara, the city of her father Nisus, the safety of which depends on his lock of hair. Carme, Scylla's nurse, tries her magical charms on king Nisus so that he may give up his opposition to Scylla's desire - in vain. Scylla, driven on by her passion, cuts the lock and Megara is ruined. As soon as we grasp that not only the relation of Scylla and Carme but the whole dramatic situation of the Latin poem informs Spenser's episode, that Artegall is to Britomart and her father's kingdom what Minos is to Scylla and her father's city, we understand Britomart's response to her lover's image, her premonitions of death, and Glaucé's desperate efforts to undo her love by magic.

Yet, fitting and, indeed, inescapable though the parallels are, they will not be accepted without demur. For Spenser does not recreate 'the whole dramatic situation' in Virgil. Ciris presents an emergency, with the unbending wills and drives of its protagonists vividly realized, so that we detect clearly the logic of fate. Scylla's love is uncontrollable. Nisus refuses to compromise by letting her leave the city, even after Carme's efforts.

⁹ Variorum III, 334.

Hence she is bound, as a last resort, to cut her father's talismanic lock, thus ruining the city to gain access to Minos. As for The Faerie Queene, we can only say that Artegall's appearance in the mirror is ominous by implication. Deheubarth's fall through him remains pure inference. We do not see Artegall actively warring on Ryence, nor does the poem elsewhere hint at any hostile designs. Similarly, who shall say whether Ryence would have disapproved of his daughter's passion? And how could Britomart interpret her love as inevitably sealing the ruin of the realm? We lack any evidence to make this even a likely eventuality, let alone a certainty. Indeed, Spenser's other source would rather lead us to expect a happy ending.

Whereas Minos overthrows Megara, Ruggiero, while never betraying his loyalty to Agramante, fails to bring about his victory. But then he discovers that through his ancestors he belongs with Charlemagne's party and, duly converted to christianity, marries Bradamante.

Anyway, Britomart does not attribute her dismay to any political implications of her love. As we have seen, she has another explanation altogether, nonsensical though it is. Moreover, though her acute distress makes her consultation of the mirror appear as momentous as Scylla's cutting of the lock, her action, unlike Scylla's, does not deprive the state of its magical security. On the contrary, one would have thought that without consultation the mirror could not fulfil its protective purpose. This brings us up against a paradox that earlier on we overlooked. If Merlin's present has the power to safeguard the kingdom, it is not just ironical but illogical for it to be, implicitly, the cause of its ruin.

Literal reading cannot but founder on the two incongruities singled out here. Will conceptual reading fare any better? So far only one aspect of Ryence's mirror, as described in stanza 19, has been highlighted, namely that it serves to reveal hostile machinations. The same stanza also tells us that it shows 'what ever thing was in the world contaynd, / Betwixt the lowest earth and heavens hight'. One must infer that the entire universe is plotting against Britomart's poor father. The absurdity of this surely disqualifies the mirror as an imaginary instrument for the use of an imaginary ruler. In view of its all-inclusive scope it must be a symbol of the world, especially since, most unusually for a mirror,

'it round and hollow shaped was, / Like to the world it selfe, and seem'd a world of glas'. It stands for the brittle world of Time, which it highlights as 'viciously' mirroring glory as virtue.¹⁰ More particularly, it stands for Time as it reflects heavenly love, because it is first referred to as 'Venus looking glas' (III.i.18). For this specification need not allude to its literal capacity for revealing Artegall as Britomart's future lover. Gavin Douglas's poem The Palice of Honour, whose broad thematic resemblance to The Faerie Queene has been pointed out by Hankins,¹¹ also features a mirror of Venus, one singularly reminiscent of Ryence's but hardly amatory. It surpasses both 'the costly subtil quent spectacle of Rome' (1492), which 'enabled the Romans to see the lands all round them and whether they intended peace or war', and 'the myrrour send up to Canyce' (1493), which 'could show coming adversity and reveal a lover's inconstancy'. In it one

mycht se at a sycht
The dedes and fetes of every erdly wycht,
All thinges gone lyk as they wer present. (1495-97)¹²

Douglas proceeds to a lengthy summary of sacred and profane history as presented by the mirror, which suggests that it stands for 'all time'. Now Time breaks heavenly love even as the virtues reflecting it heal separateness: for the Time being they do so ἐκ μέρους. Hence the paradoxical nature of Merlin's gift. 'For now we se through a glasse darkely: but then shal we se face to face', as St Paul notes in his rhapsody on ἀγάπη.¹³

Spenser's little Egyptian allegory, in stanza 20, confirms this interpretation. He compares the mirror to Phao's tower, 'ybuilded all of glasse', like Panthea (I.x.58). Its maker is Ptolomae, surely the ancient astronomer,¹⁴ whose name, up until the sixteenth century,

¹⁰ Compare p.59 above.

¹¹ Source and Meaning, p.40.

¹² The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas, edited by P.J.Bawcutt, The Scottish Text Society, Fourth Series, Vol.III (Edinburgh and London, 1967), p.96, 200 (nn.).

¹³ I Corinthians 13.12.

¹⁴ For this spelling of 'Ptolemy' see also V Proem 7.

epitomized cosmology. As a hieroglyph for his universe of moving heavenly bodies this tower would symbolize a world immersed in temporality. 'Phao' derives from $\phi\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ or $\phi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$, 'light', in the New Testament a near synonym of 'glory'. Thus the injunction of Jesus to his disciples to let their light shine, since they 'are the light of the worlde', corresponds exactly to the injunction of Paul to 'glorifie God in your bodie'.¹⁵ Panthea, under the rubric of holiness, virtue transparent, 'seemd the brightest thing, that was'. Phao, however, does not let her light shine but, on the contrary, 'long did lurke / From all mens vew, that none might her discoure'. This suggests virtue opaque, temperance. But then, Ptolomae shatters the tower, thus making it symbolic of virtue refractive: 'Yet when his love was false, he with a peaze it brake'. For this does not make literal sense. The tower, 'impregnable', with Phao locked inside, precludes adultery. (Not that it has been designed for this purpose: 'She might all men vew out of her bowre'.) Spenser calls Phao 'false' because, being hidden, she belies herself, 'light'. Ptolomae's action proves her even so true, $\epsilon\kappa \mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$. The paradox of the tower unassailable in smithereens complements that of Ryence's kingdom safeguarded by the mirror that ruins it. Indeed, the tower mirrors glory: literally $\phi\acute{\omega}\delta-\phi\acute{\omega}\rho\omicron\varsigma$, it stands for Venus qua morning star, the reverse of Gloriana qua evening star, ushering in the day of Eternity, 'to virtue to glory'.¹⁶

Britomart's consultation of 'Venus looking glas' makes her, one infers, another Venus, representative of heavenly love. Apparently happening by chance, it is not really a contingent event any more than Venus's pursuit of the stray Cupid.¹⁷ It symbolizes commitment to Time. Common sense tells us that what she sees in the mirror must be her own image - conceptually, not, of course, visually. That she falls irrevocably in love with it implies its 'likeness', for we may assume that here, as with Arthur-Gloriana and Scudamour-Amoret, love indicates metaphorical equivalence. Her utter distress because, as she says, she loves (herself as) an image maximizes the

¹⁵ Matthew 5.16, 14; p.22 above.

¹⁶ See again p.48, 80.

¹⁷ p.99.

impact of Time, thus specifying the scene as about glory 'not yet', chastity. Her physical as well as mental anticipation of death (35, 39, 44, 52), so far from being a touching mark of sexual inexperience or, alternatively, the manifestation of self-destructive tendencies inherent in narcissism,¹⁸ conveys forcibly that generation constitutes, from one point of view, Time's desperate rearguard fight against mortality. Britomart's anguish represents Man's inescapable plight. 'Neither God of love, nor God of sky / Can doe ... that, which cannot be done'. Mention of the two gods betokens a dual allegiance, to Eternity, the abode of love infolded, and to Time, the realm of the ever moving sky, which perpetuates separateness. And clearly neither can make itself compatible with the other. Thus, symbolically, Britomart's situation parallels the dilemmas of her models Bradamante and Scylla. Her consultation of the mirror is, after all, as fateful as Scylla's cutting of the lock. It signifies eternal union ruined into Time. Yet her repudiation of her image even as she identifies herself with it intimates love's truth to itself, however proleptic. The poet orients her 'to glory' as well as 'to virtue'. The immediate, dark, Virgilian backdrop obscures but cannot take away the distant, bright, Ariostan perspective. Spenser's obviously perverse imitation of his sources draws attention to his secretly conscientious use of them to steady and focus thematic perception.¹⁹

How does Artegall bear out conceptually his appearance as Britomart's mirror image? How is he '(to virtue) from glory'? Like all the quest heroes Artegall unfolds Arthur. Unlike them he has his equivalence to Arthur highlighted in his name, especially when spelled 'Arthegall', as here. We can see the rationale of this onomastic link: the bible has one word for both moral perfection generally and justice in particular, 'righteousness'. The fact that Artegall wears the armour of Achilles (25) implies the same tight correlation. For it is not simply as though 'the near identification with Achilles works to establish Artegall as a supreme warrior and hero, worthy to bear the armour of the greatest of the Greeks, a

¹⁸ - or incest; one thinks of Nohrnberg's splendidly wrongheaded psycho-sexual lucubrations (Analogy, pp.432-33, 442-52).

¹⁹ Compare p.67.

trophy his survivors had competed for'.²⁰ Its inscription, 'Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win', makes him not only another Achilles but also another Hector, since Hector actually won the (old) armour of Achilles, by killing Patroclos. (The inheritor of his new armour, Ulysses, secured it for himself against the claims of Ajax through rhetoric.²¹) As we have seen, Arthur is, similarly, another Achilles-Hector.²² So by implication Artegall shares Arthur's orientation 'from glory to glory'. But in Artegall Spenser focusses this as 'from glory', in several ways. Whereas Arthur's armour shines like the mid-day sun (I.vii.29), Artegall's is merely 'round about yfretted all with gold', like the skirt of Prays-desire under the rubric of virtue opaque, temperance (II.ix.37).²³ Whereas Arthur's shield can 'Phoebus golden face ... attaint' with its radiance (I.vii.34), Artegall's merely bears a 'litle Ermilin', 'crowned', to be sure, in token of glory consummate,²⁴ yet, with its 'pouldred skin', belying the mark of its species,²⁵ symbolic of glory 'all of a piece'. And then, Spenser associates Arthur with both Hector and Achilles only implicitly, while carefully weighting him as the Trojan triumphant in his very downfall. By contrast, he explicitly associates Artegall with Achilles. Even the simile to describe his manly looks, 'as Phoebus face out of the east' (24), reverses its appearance 'to glory' by conjuring up the Greek's fatal 'sunrise'.²⁶ Since his status as another Hector remains sheer inference, he as it were 'breaks' Arthur qua Hector-Achilles. As, apparently, another Achilles only, he represents, in accordance with his role as the Greeks' main asset and liability in the Trojan war, justice as the determining factor of magnificence yet even so as the delay of its eternal transcendence. Or, to take the proverbial rather than the Homeric Achilles, justice makes morality invulnerable but it is its vulnerable heel.

²⁰ Kathleen Williams, Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass (London, 1966), p.133.

²¹ 'quid facundia posset, / re patuit, fortisque viri tulit arma disertus' (Ovid, Metamorphoses XIII.382-83).

²² pp.46-47.

²³ Compare p.42.

²⁴ See p.27.

²⁵ Sidney has 'the hate-spott Ermelin' (Poems from 'The Old Arcadia' 62, l.116) and 'spotlesse Ermine' (Astrophil and Stella 86, l.5). See The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, edited by William A. Ringler Jr (Oxford, 1962; rpt.1971), p.89, 212.

²⁶ See again p.47.

It may be felt that this type of exegesis, with its tense conceptualizing of a few selected stanzas, distorts the mirror scene as much as do the half-literal readings it seeks to supplant. Who could deny that the Canto comes alive dramatically in Britomart's conversation with her nurse Glaucé? Spenser may not enable the reader to enter their minds. Yet the two women do seem to be genuine personalities that he can relate to. The confrontation of the innocence of youth, with its blissful self-sufficiency for the first time rudely challenged, and the wisdom of age, as ineffectual in its sympathy as it is heartwarming, has great human appeal. And the scene is none the less touching for being far more 'strange' than critics tend to allow. But then, it has never been proposed that we should guard against emotional involvement in the first place.²⁷ Spenser does not frustrate but exploit it, just as novelists do. Only he does to a different purpose, to earth one's understanding of concepts rather than to provide scope for vicarious experience. Let the fiction absorb us, by all means; as long as we yield to the actual text, with all its illogicalities. We are meant to enjoy ourselves 'in this delightfull land of Faery'. However, if we persist in chasing phantom stories, we shall soon be complaining, if we are honest, of 'weary steps' and 'tedious travell'. Like the poet we are to be 'nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight' (VI Proem 1). Where he thinks in sense images more consistently and on an incomparably vaster scale than any of the Metaphysical Poets, let us unite our faculties instead of perversely cultivating a 'dissociation of sensibility'.

Like Britomart's behaviour, Glaucé's is literally incomprehensible. She tells Britomart that she should 'with reason yet repress / The growing evill' (46) and attempts to exorcize it magically (49-51). This contradicts fundamentally her previous attitude. She had protested reassuringly that 'though no reason may apply / Salve to your sore, yet love can higher stye, / Then reasons reach' (36). She had insisted that both Britomart's 'mind' and her 'fortune' are good, contrasting them emphatically with the mind of Myrrha, Biblis and Pasiphaë and with the fortune of

²⁷ See p.30.

Narcissus (40-45). She has sworn solemnly 'by this most sacred head / Of my deare foster child, to ease thy grieve, / And win thy will' (33). Spenser never explains Glauce's change of mind. He merely refrains from calling attention to it explicitly.

Sequential reading further obscures its occurrence: in Canto iii she reverts to her original attitude as a matter of course. Nevertheless, once detected it proves too blatant an incongruity to make psychological sense. Thus she could not be said to try magic first, before setting out to find Artegall, to see if she can save herself the trouble. Her prompt, extravagant vow, 'death nor daunger from thy dew reliefe / Shall me debarre' (33), shows that she is not the type to consult her own convenience. Or is this mere consolatory hyperbole? Hardly, for her subsequent performance bears out her total commitment. Glauce and the mirror are complementary metaphors, as stanza 45 suggests, where she states its properties with a firmness as though she controlled it herself. She is another 'Glauce' (glassy) world of Time. Her ambivalent response to Britomart parallels Merlin's present, at once protective and ruinous. She safeguards the girl broken, as Ptolomae's tower does Phao. And just as Britomart decries the mirror even as she trusts it, so she denounces Glauce even as she confides in her. For the nurse's magical rites, while meant to remedy Britomart's condition, are not intended to dispel her love, as we have so far carelessly assumed. Her attitude to love corresponds to that of her Virgilian model, Carme:

non ego te incepto (fierī quod non pote) conor
flectere, Amor, neque est cum dis contendere nostrum! 28

Instead she directs her magic against herself. She asks her charge to spit upon her face (50), in sign of repudiation, true to her self-abnegating vow. 'That sayd, her round about she from her turnd, / She turned her contrarie to the Sunne' (51). 'From her', that is, away from Time, 'to glory'; 'contrarie to the Sunne', that is, against Arthur's apparent orientation towards Faeryland. Glauce is to Britomart what Timon is to Arthur, foster parent Time.²⁹ Both are aged; indeed, her name, as *γλαυκή*, 'grey', advertizes this. But

²⁸ Ciris 328-29.

²⁹ See p.43.

Glauce reverses Timon. Timon warns Arthur against love as 'losse of time', orienting him 'to virtue'; though, of course, 'all in vaine' (I.ix.9-11). Glauce warns Britomart against Time as loss of love, orienting her 'to glory'; though, of course, equally in vain. As derived from γλαῦξ, 'owl',³⁰ her name draws attention to precisely that aspect which Τιμῶν outshines, namely Time qua vicious circle. For traditionally the owl is the bird 'that of deth the bode bryngeth'.³¹

(ii) Canto iii

If my contention were that a relation of overt parallelism obtains among many episodes of The Faerie Queene, and among certain Britomart episodes in particular, I would be labouring a truism. This line of enquiry was promisingly opened up more than twenty years ago in an early essay by Fowler.³² Unfortunately, his carefully articulated comparison between the Malecasta episode and the Malbecco episode was soon to be overshadowed by Northrop Frye's altogether more sweeping approach in 'The Structure of Imagery in The Faerie Queene', perhaps the most influential piece of Spenser criticism to date.³³ It is a dire prophecy, already voluminously fulfilled in Nohrnberg's Analogy. The title of Frye's paper intimates what has happened. The poet's fiction has come to be regarded as a free-floating mass of imagery. Its structure consists in the pattern of resemblances among its constituent images. This approach has one advantage: it conveniently disposes of the need to press for a narrative rationale. However, it neither demonstrates that there is none nor accounts for the appearance to the contrary. Also, it refrains from explaining why images should keep recurring. Worse, it seems to be frantically adducing ever more parallels, even the merest skeletons, for the very purpose of stifling this obvious but unwelcome question. Spenser's admirably seaworthy vessel, with its well-briefed captain and its

³⁰ Not from γλαυχή, which does not exist (The Faerie Queene, ed. Hamilton, p.322, n.30.2).

³¹ Chaucer, The Parliament of Fowls 343 (Works, p.314); and compare Faerie Queene I.ix.33 and, especially, II.xii.36.

³² 'Six Knights at Castle Joyous', SP, 56 (1959), 583-99.

³³ UTQ, 30 (1961), 109-27.

'jolly Mariners' (I.xii.42), has been taken over by one-eyed pirates, cut loose from its conceptual moorings and set adrift, dismantled to an unreliable raft, like another bateau ivre. Let us rescue it from its disastrous, if intoxicating, course. The poem's episodes cohere thematically. Such coherence is naturally expressed through analogous images - but not necessarily. Thus the constituent scenes of the flashback fail to provide overt analogies, as images; so much so that they seem readily intelligible in sequence, as real story. What more natural, on a suspension of disbelief in magicians, than that Glauce, at her wit's end in Canto ii, should decide that the thing to do is to consult Merlin? And what more natural than that, after Merlin's encouraging revelation of the designs of Providence, Britomart should set out in quest of Artegall?

Once again, however, we should not allow our disposition to presume a narrative rationale to blind us to the logic of the actual text. Nor should we impatiently dismiss any incongruities we might find as quite acceptable by romance standards - a rather hypothetical criterion anyway. Glauce decides to go to Merlin in order to learn Artegall's whereabouts (6). He is certainly a good person to consult, being omniscient (15), as she knows (21). Curiously, though, Spenser motivates Glauce's decision otherwise. He has her turn to Merlin as maker of the mirror (see 6 again). This is odd, because it implies that as such Merlin is responsible not just for the proper functioning of the mirror but for the image that has appeared in it as well, as though it were an imperfect replica of one of his own visions. Imperfect? The mirror 'vertue had, to shew in perfect sight, / What ever thing ... So that it to the looker appertaynd ... Ne ought in secret from the same remaynd' (ii.19). If we take the poet at his word, Glauce's consultation of Merlin is entirely superfluous. Merlin could not have anything to add to what has already been revealed by the mirror. Nor does he. This assertion will seem preposterous, in view of the magician's lengthy prophetic outburst. But then, genealogical prophecy by no means answers Glauce's simple questions, 'what meanes shall she out seeke, or what wayes take? / How shall she know, how shall she find the man?' (25). The prophecy does contain an answer, the single line

'he wonneth in the land of Fayeree' (26). This is practically useless, though, for subsequently we find Britomart 'searching all lands and each remotest part' (iv.6). Merlin's speech is mostly beside the point and, to the extent that it is not, totally uninformative.

But surely this incongruity makes sense literally? Can we not see Merlin as a sage inhabiting the realm of vision, who, if unconcerned with immediate practicalities, offers something far more significant, namely the assurance of providential election to a crucial historical role? Do we not have Britomart here rising above the narrowly private reaction to her plight thanks to the mighty vista of 'destined descents' (iii.2) and thus acquiring the balance and purposiveness of maturity? This objection registers valuably the scene's overall impact, the sense of a liberating breakthrough. Yet this proper atmospheric response does not amount to narrative understanding of the fiction. After all, liberating though the prophecy may be as testimony to the divine approval of Britomart's love, as a forecast of events that will happen in fact it is the very opposite, rigorously deterministic. Nor is the predicted course of events a triumphant tale of progress - which might have taken the sting out of the determinism. On the contrary, Merlin presents history as a tremendously costly and wasteful process, continually threatening Britondom with extinction and allowing it only intermittent resurgence. Admittedly, the prophecy culminates in the climactic reference to Elizabeth (49). However, if we should have to think of Britomart as happily embracing her destiny for the sake of the glorious Tudor queen, her 'mature decision' would be too transparently the poet's compliment to his dedicatee to qualify as genuine motivation. We would feel tempted to extrapolate the whole prophecy from its apparently spurious context and discard it as one of those regrettably obligatory epic catalogues, perfunctorily inserted in servile flattery. Spenser never specifies why Britomart conceives 'hope of comfort glad' (51). Implicitly, however, he rules out that it is because of Elizabeth, by ending the prophecy in a highly dramatic aposiopesis:

But yet the end is not. There Merlin stayd,
As overcomen of the spirites powre,
Or other ghastly spectacle dismayd,
That secretly he saw, yet note discoure. (50)

Without any doubt this 'ghastly spectacle' spells the coming collapse, yet again, of British rule with the end of the Tudor succession, at the death of the Virgin Queen. Merlin's prophecy does release Britomart into history. Yet history will constrict her race, as she fully realizes, witness her anxious response (43 and 50). Nor does the magician's recital imply an altogether happy fulfilment of Britomart's passion at least in personal terms: Artegall, though destined to love her and give her a child, is to be 'too rathe cut off by practice criminall / Of secret foes' (28). Literal reading does not quite account for Britomart's hopefulness. And it positively belies the poet's assertion that she returns with Glaucé 'well instructed ... Of all, that needed them to be inquired' (51).

Like Glaucé Merlin is another mirror. His revelations are broken images of Britomart. Spenser as it were unfolds Douglas's mirror,³⁴ presenting separately something like its survey of history. As a result this is only implicitly a mirror scene. Thus the poet minimizes the impact of Time, to highlight love as glory 'already', friendship. The announcement of Artegall's residence in Faeryland complements his appearance in the mirror, since Faeryland and mirror are alike symbols of Time. Being explicitly named 'Arthegall', he still shares Arthur's orientation 'from glory to glory'; again focussed as 'from glory', in that 'ne other to himselfe is knowne this day, / But that he by an Elfe was gotten of a Fay' (26), as though he were akin to the patron of temperance. However, Merlin brings out explicitly what Artegall qua Britomart's reflection merely implies, namely that he 'is no Fary borne, ne sib at all / To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestriall' - in other words, heavenly in essence, like Britomart herself. That is what makes her so cheerful, not the knowledge of where to look for him, as literal readers suppose. Nor does Merlin expect her to set out towards Faeryland. The sheer uselessness of his information implies as much. But the argument does not depend on a strictly uncertain inference. Like Glaucé Merlin requires repudiation by Britomart, though subtly

³⁴ p.137.

rather than dramatically, in accordance with the shift of emphasis from chastity to friendship. Artegall is 'renowmed ... From where the day out of the sea doth spring, / Untill the closure of the Evening' (27). This phrase aligns him with Arthur in his sun-like career, though, appropriately, only dimly, as glory by report, fama.³⁵ It also conveys cyclical Time, which Merlin himself represents. Now for Britomart to be united with Artegall 'from thence', as Merlin says, means to be oriented contrary to the sun and away from the magician, out of Faeryland, as in Canto ii. She is to bring him back 'to this his native soyle', heaven, 'to glory'; even though, of course, so that they may jointly fight (28), 'to virtue'. Or, as Spenser himself puts it near the beginning of the Canto, she seeks him 'from the worlds end' (3), that is, from Telamond and thus against Arthur, armed by Merlin.³⁶

It has been conceded that Merlin's prophecy, unlike his revelation of Artegall's whereabouts, which almost gets drowned in it, comes very close to seeming a stage in a developing Britomart narrative; a fact that classifies it with the Temple of Venus episode, and with Scudamour's story in Book IV generally, as symbolic of friendship.³⁷ Whereas the incongruities of the mirror scene proper stare us in the face, those of the consultation scene remain largely hidden. To emphasize them would be to distort a meaningful variation. However, to miss them would preclude understanding. The promising character of the prophecy should not deceive us into thinking that Britomart needs encouragement, as though Merlin had to help her make up her mind. Literally her mind is already made up, or she would not have gone to ask him where to find Artegall. Also, Merlin's assertion that although 'the fates are firme ... Yet ought mens good endeavours them confirme' (25) contradicts itself, as Glauce's pointed query suggests. If he foresees the future with certainty, it cannot depend on a moral imperative that Britomart might conceivably ignore. Moreover, if the vicissitudes of her distant posterity are fixed, they offer no scope for her acute concern.

³⁵ Compare p.41.

³⁶ See p.77, especially n.5.

³⁷ pp.112-13, 126, 129.

Indeed, even if they were not, her sympathy spanning more than a thousand years overtakes literal belief. So does Merlin's dismay at the prospect of the Stuart succession; it would be out of all proportion even if it should express directly that of Spenser, who may be presumed to have remained unprophetically ignorant of what the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were to bring. Anyway, the prophecy, as an extensive, detailed and unambiguous history forecast - a straightforward continuation, in the future tense, of the chronicle of 'Briton monuments' Arthur reads at Alma's castle - does not seem credible as an act of prophecy, though one must allow for Merlin's omniscience. But how credible is that? And then, how strange that the imaginary characters Britomart and Artegall should have historical descendants.³⁸ Neither Virgil nor Ariosto offers a precedent. Their heroes are legendary or at least pseudo-historical (Turpin). Spenser's, by contrast, are pure invention and unique to him. Nor do they simply fill a blank. They take the place of Arthur, the most famous and most amply 'documented' historical Briton in the chronicle literature. And there are other, less spectacular divergences from the Galfridian tradition. Some of these might be accounted for by citing other chroniclers.³⁹ But such an explanation would imply that Merlin's prophecy is randomly eclectic and idiosyncratic or else represents Spenser's considered opinion on wie es eigentlich gewesen. The former alternative seems a priori unlikely. As for the latter, surely the poet cannot have wanted to publish a rival version of history as part of a poem, where it has to stand unargued, in an age which was, in this matter, neither indifferent nor uncritical.

Merlin's prophecy mirrors Britomart. It is 'Arthegall', like Arthur, in its overall similarity to 'Briton monuments', which complements Arthur under the rubric of temperance, 'from glory'.

³⁸ Though there was a historical Arthgal of Warwick (according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, that is), there is no evidence that he was brother of Cadur and son of Gorlois like Spenser's Artegall, as Hamilton inadvertently suggests (The Faerie Queene, ed., p.530, n.3.2, 330, n.26.2).

³⁹ See Carrie A. Harper, The Sources of the British Chronicle History in Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' (Philadelphia, 1910); relevant extracts in Variorum III, 228-34.

Britomart's anxiety represents her repudiation of this Artegall and thus her own orientation 'to glory'. But her reaction will be found negligible in comparison with that in Canto ii. This stands to reason. Merlin prophesies 'Arthegall'. Now what could Time prophesy, metaphorically, if not Eternity? While the contents of Merlin's speech correspond to his statement that Artegall thinks himself a Faery, its genre corresponds to his statement that as a matter of fact he is not. Nor is this the only way in which Spenser conveys the shift of emphasis. 'Arthegall' appears as the history of Britondom even as it goes down under, obtruding that aspect of himself which enables Britomart to identify herself with him.⁴⁰ Again, the prophecy has Britomart herself for its fountainhead, even though it moves away from her, reversing the orientation of 'Briton monuments', which leads right up to Arthur but pointedly excludes him. Moreover, the Tudor culmination of the prophecy seems already the consummation of justice, that is, Britomart herself rather than her image:

Thenceforth eternall union shall be made
 Betweene the nations different afore,
 And sacred Peace shall lovingly perswade
 The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore. (49)

In this light Merlin's qualification, 'but yet the end is not' (50), literally almost a banality, becomes intelligibly momentous. Indeed, as a biblical echo it should conjure up its original, haunting context, Christ's great eschatological discourse:

And ye shal heare of warres, and rumors of warres: se that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to passe, but the end is not yet. For nacion shal arise against nacion, and realme against realme, & there shalbe pestilence, and famine, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are but the beginning of sorowes.

This is the 'ghastly spectacle' that dismays Merlin, negating his vision of peace. But it remains unuttered, in accordance with Christ's admonition, 'se that ye be not troubled'. After all, it is merely 'the beginning of sorowes', the birth throes of Eternity.⁴² The magician regains his 'chearefull looks'. Even so Britomart and her nurse 'unto their home retird' (51), however comforted, away from 'the worlds end'.

⁴⁰ For Britain as Faeryland in so far as it manifests glory: p.71, 45.

⁴¹ Matthew 24.6-8. ⁴² ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐσχάτης; compare Romans 8.22 (συνωδίνευ).

Spenser's substitution of the imaginary Britomart and Artegall for Arthur makes it impossible to take his genealogical list literally. Their joint appearance at its head, together one, like the joint appearance of Cambel and Telamond as titular heroes of Book IV, neatly symbolizes magnificence qua ἀγάνη, intimating that it is almost, but not quite, the world's end. Let us pause for some other felicities of detail. Merlin says of Artegall that 'sooth he is the sonne of Gorlois' (27). This differentiates him from even as it aligns him with Arthur, who, begotten by Uther magically transformed into the likeness of Igera's husband, is apparently the son of Gorlois. Since Arthur's supernatural conception betokens glory,⁴³ Artegall's natural conception must betoken submersion of glory. Even so his parentage proves him 'no Faery'. Similarly, while Arthur and Artegall alike are to perish through treachery, Arthur will be vindicated supernaturally by his return in glory, whereas Artegall will be vindicated naturally, 'from glory', by his lineal descendants, unnamed son - Vortipore - Malgo - Careticus (28-33). For this vindication must be metaphorical. One would be hard put to it to apply Merlin's paradoxical description, to Britomart, of Artegall's son as 'his Image dead, / That living him in all activity / To thee shall represent' (29) to a person. The magician's words mean: like father, like son - both stand for eternal life mirrored in mortality. Also, literally lineal descent flies in the face of Spenser's authority. Geoffrey has Arthur succeeded by his nephew Constantine and Constantine by his nephew Aurelius Conan, while he does not specify the relationships of the others: 'Vortiporius came after Conan ... Malgo came next ... After Malgo came Keredic'.⁴⁴ To be sure, the latter part of the succession formally allows of Spenser's specification. Also, in the former part the poet at least approximates history. The dying Arthur handed the crown to Constantine, son of Cador. And Conan took it by violence from an unnamed uncle 'who ought to have reigned after Constantine' - and may have been Constantine's brother. Now Merlin predicts that Artegall's son

⁴³ p.45.

⁴⁴ The History of the Kings of Britain, translated by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966; rpt.1978), pp.261-63.

from the head
Of his coosin Constantius without dread
Shall take the crowne, that was his fathers right,
And therewith crowne himselfe in th'others stead. (29)

This seems an invitation to identify him as Conan and Constantius as Constantine's presumptive brother; especially because Constantius, as his cousin, could well be a son of Cador, Artegall's brother (27). So construed Spenser falsifies history only in making Conan of the same generation with Constantine and Constantius. The strong semblance of historical accuracy symbolizes Time as virtually Eternity, friendship. So does the poet's deviation from history. Spenser mirrors Geoffrey in that he leaves the robber of the crown unnamed, rather than his victim. By the same token he identifies them. The crown stands for glory, so the robber stands for virtue as it suppresses glory. The victim represents, in accordance with his name, that which is constantius, 'more steadfast', than thieving Time, Eternity. All this orients Artegall's son 'from glory'. Taking the place of Constantius, he focusses Arthur, Man in Christ thinking it 'no robbery to be equal with God',⁴⁵ as positively robbing himself of equality with God. Yet even so he wears the crown; and, as of the same generation with Constantius, reassuringly belies even as he champions his natural cause, lineal descent.

As a compound metaphor Merlin's prophecy cannot form the second stage in a story of incipient love. The illusion that it does derives particularly from the fiction preceding the prophecy proper, which ostensibly links Cantos ii and iii. So let us explode it, with all due respect for the thematic significance of its quasi-narrative role. It would make literal sense for the nurse and her foster child to travel incognito (7): their mission calls for discretion. But why do they not present themselves openly to Merlin? Surely they must realize that their disguise would be pointless if he can see through it and counterproductive if he cannot. Why does Glauce prevaricate in describing Britomart's condition if she is so anxious to have it remedied? How does she expect to learn Artegall's whereabouts if she is 'loth to let her purpose plaine appeare' (17)?

⁴⁵ p.70.

Of course, with Merlin we find the women's behaviour rather pathetically funny (17, 19). For we do need to get the tone right. Yet this is not tantamount to narrative understanding. After all, it takes a magician, with supernatural perceptiveness, to detect Glauce's mismanagement of Britomart's affairs. For all the homeliness of Merlin's response we cannot identify him as the embodiment of our own good-humoured common sense. The happy outcome does not explain the weird strategy. Symbolic reading does. Glauce's reluctance to reveal Britomart's plight parallels Amoret's reluctance to leave the Temple of Venus:⁴⁶ she anxiously tries not to belie love's essence, even while committed to or disguised by Time. 'Th'old woman wox half blanck' (17) when Merlin deliberately mistakes her not because she has apparently not made herself clear - a failure of communication easily mended - but for fear of having been only too outspoken. And she has, in spite of herself, what with her emphasis on the 'sore evill, which this virgin bright / Tormenteth, and doth plunge in dolefull plight' and her anticipation of death (16). She wants Merlin to recognize glory 'not yet' as, even so, glory 'already'. Hence her relief when he makes light of her 'colourable word' (19). Britomart may seem less happy about Merlin's penetration:

The doubtfull Mayd, seeing her selfe descryde,
Was all abasht, and her pure yvory
Into a cleare Carnation suddeine dyde;
As faire Aurora rising hastily,
Doth by her blushing tell, that she did lye
All night in old Tithonus frozen bed,
Whereof she seemes ashamed inwardly. (20)

But then, it is not as though the magician teases her about any secret amorous predilection. On sequential reading she has long since passed that stage. Our interpretation should be informed by the simile, no mere vapid decoration. As Aurora Britomart ushers in the day of Eternity, like Phao's tower qua φωσφόρος, but far more luminously. She heralds an unreversed sunrise.⁴⁷ Her blush represents her mild repudiation of love's commitment, as yet, to Time, 'old Tithonus', immortal but lacking eternal youth, the nocturnal extinction of glory's light. Qua friendship love is the dawn as it is the prophecy of heaven.

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⁴⁶ p.124.

⁴⁷ Compare p.138, 140.

The final scene of the flashback seems to follow on from the consultation scene as convincingly as the mirror scene seems to lead up to it: Britomart, having learnt that Artegall 'wonneth in ... Fayeree', makes ready to depart thither. Indeed, a mere dozen or so stanzas, it could pass for transitional narrative in its entirety, linking the flashback with the direct narrative, were it not that Spenser ultimately spoils the connection:

Ne rested they, till that to Faery lond
 They came, as Merlin them directed late: (so far, so good)
 Where meeting with this Redcrosse knight, she fond
 Of diverse things discourses to dilate,
 But most of Arthegall, and his estate. (62)

This ignores her previous clash with Guyon and her journey together with him and Arthur until 'at length' these companions leave her for the fleeing Florimell (i.4-19). Also, it glosses over how she found Red Cross stymied before Castle Joyous and how they fared inside (i.20-67). Still, this might seem nothing worse than crude dovetailing. But Britomart's 'discourses' flatly contradict Canto iii:

Faire Sir, I let you weete, that from the howre
 I taken was from nourses tender pap,
 I have been trained up in warlike stowre,
 To tossen speare and shield, and to affrap
 The warlike ryder to his most mishap. (ii.6)

Only on the supposition that she is fibbing can this be reconciled with Glauce's references to her military inexperience:

our weake hands (whom need new strength shall teach)
 The dreadfull speare and shield to exercize ...
 Ne ought ye want, but skill, which practize small
 Will bring, and shortly make you a mayd Martiall. (iii.53)

Yet since Canto ii precedes Canto iii and refrains from casting doubt on Britomart's veracity, this supposition would arise only in retrospect. It certainly does not derive strength from Britomart's superb performance as a knight throughout Books III-V, which would discredit the flashback, rather.

Nor does the departure scene merely cut off the flashback from the direct narrative. Internally it proves as unintelligible as the mirror scene even on superficial inspection. Glauce deems 'that counsell aye most fit, / That of the time doth dew advantage take' (52). As a general sentiment this is unexceptional. But in what

way does the fact that 'now all Britanie doth burne in armes bright' favour Britomart's chances of finding Artegall in Faeryland? One would have thought that war is an impediment to free travel. In fact, Glauce changes tack in the next stanza: 'That therefore nought our passage may empeach, / Let us in feigned armes our selves disguise'. Strangely, though, she makes Britomart wear a disguise that advertizes itself as such, giving her the armour of Angela, the famous Saxon queen recently vanquished (58-59). But then, Spenser never tells any story of Britomart passing undetected through the Saxon ranks. Nor does he say that, fortunately, the disguise turned out to have been a superfluous precaution. He drops the idea of disguise at once and presents Britomart as donning armour out of a desire to embrace the life martial for its own sake, in emulation of the great female warriors Bunduca, Guendolen, Martia, Emmilen and Angela (54-57). One wonders what contribution Britomart in Angela's armour could make to the military fortunes of the Britons in their resistance against the Saxons - for the poet never tells us. One also wonders how the adoption of 'advent'rous knighthood' as an end in itself could yet be instrumental in the promotion of her marital destiny. True, as a matter of fact Britomart meets Artegall in her knightly capacity, in IV.vi. And, on the premise of literal fiction, her career would be providential. However, on the same premise she would have to 'guide the heavenly causes to their constant terme' (25). And, evidently, she does no such thing.

Actually, even the obvious continuity between the consultation scene and the departure scene will, on reflection, be found illusory. In the former Britomart orients herself 'to glory', away from Faeryland. So the latter, where she sallies forth into Faeryland, does not follow on, unless she should have changed her mind radically. But there are no signs that she has. The very smoothness of the narrative transition confirms its unreality. Alternatively, we could argue as follows. Merlin identifies Arthur by revealing his parentage (I.ix.5). He identifies Britomart, in reverse, by revealing her progeny. Merlin arms Arthur (I.vii.36). So, by implication, he keeps Britomart unarmed. Ergo her military ambition does not follow on from his prophecy. To detect Britomart's turn-about-face is to see its symbolic import: she

reverses herself, becoming her own mirror image, another Artegall, oriented 'from glory', into Faeryland, to signify justice. Enacting her name, she obliterates her Britondom, and her sex, manifest glory, by her martial outfit. Angela's armour is merely 'fretted round with gold' (58), like that of Artegall in the mirror (ii.25). It has a 'brave bauldrick' (iii.59), like Arthur's (I.vii.29-30) but lacking its central glory, the jewel shining like Hesperus, so that it must be night-Time. The literal fiction clinches the inference: Glauce arms Britomart 'in th'evening late'. It will be remembered that Artegall's quest in aid of Irena takes him westward (V.vi.7), like a setting sun. (As always, the fiction's roots are conceptual, not political. The story does model itself, to some extent, on, say, Lord Grey's 'pacification' of Ireland. But it cannot mean it, if only because he did not dispose of its Grantorto. Or are we to suppose that Spenser naively dreamt he did? On the contrary, the poet uses the intractable Irish problem to mean Time as it postpones glory.⁴⁸) And then, Britomart's 'mighty speare, / Which Bladud made by Magick art of yore' (III.iii.60), elsewhere specified as 'Hebene' (IV.v.8, 26, vi.6), is patently the selfsame spear Timias carries for Arthur (I.vii.37, II.viii.17), that is, the spear with which Achilles kills Hector. Taking it over, as it were, from the squire, she obscures its preciousness.⁴⁹

To establish Britomart's full equivalence with Artegall in the departure scene we must emphasize, as we have done so far, her orientation 'from glory'. We should not forget, though, that she identifies herself with him in respect of their essential glory, which, qua virtue, they suppress.⁵⁰ How does she, by now manifestly his 'Image dead', even so 'living him ... represent' (III.iii.29)? Just as the armour won from Achilles makes Artegall implicitly Trojan, so the armour of the defeated Angela makes Britomart implicitly Troynovantine, British. Meaning dictates the literally counterproductive disguise. Or take Britomart simply as another Angela. As such she is, passively, dead or, actively, qua

⁴⁸ Compare p.38.

⁴⁹ See again p.47.

⁵⁰ p.79.

Saxon leader, extinguishing Britondom: obviously 'from glory'. Yet, implicitly, Spenser qualifies. Angela and her Angles (56) suggest 'angels' and thus heaven - one thinks of the celebrated papal pun. Also, the Saxons generally are pagan invaders. Hence they could symbolize Time as having invaded Eternity, a variant of Time as having stolen Eternity⁵¹ that specifies the dispossessor's residence as heaven itself. This interpretation would certainly fit Red Cross, the one titular hero to descend 'from ancient race / Of Saxon kings' - indeed, 'from English race' (I.x.65, 60) - since he can see the New Jerusalem. So it must apply also to Britomart qua Saxon, even though she turns a blind eye to her glorious surroundings; especially since she meets and makes friends with Red Cross, if only to part company with him (III.iii.62). Again, Glauce's advice to Britomart to take advantage of the time (52), that is, of Time, implies the vantage point of Eternity. This is how she defines the opportunity:

good king Uther now doth make
Strong warre upon the Paynim brethren, hight
Octa and Oza, whom he lately brake
Beside Cayr Verolame, in victorious fight.

Literally this does not make sense. Uther could not very well continue to fight those he has already overcome. Anyway, he was poisoned soon after this particular battle and did not survive.⁵² The quotation symbolizes the militant peace of God 'Pendragon', Lord of Hosts, in Time, justice as virtue. Also, it indicates the juncture at which Arthur accedes to the throne: Britomart's chance to substitute for him and thus prove herself 'Arthegall' - 'from glory' in taking on Arthur's earthly rule yet implicitly sharing his heavenly destiny. Whereas in the other two scenes of the flashback Glauce and her foster child look to Eternity, repudiating Time, severely or mildly, as not suited to love, here they look from Eternity, embracing Time as suitable. 'So time their turne did fit' (58). It does because, from the vantage point of justice, Time, though overclouding glory, is 'passage' (53): it passes, ultimately into nothingness. Spenser spells this out in the Proem to Book V. Eleven stanzas long, like the departure scene, in fact (III.iii.52-62), it presents Time at the eleventh hour.

⁵¹ p.70.

⁵² Geoffrey, History, pp.209-12.

II Britomart and Arthur

As a symbol of three distinct virtues the flashback would seem to transgress the rule that every Legend represents only its titular virtue. Has Spenser momentarily relaxed his schematic discipline? Not really. Uniting the themes which Books III-V separate, he presents them 'whole in part': a structural metaphor for chastity. He as it were recoils from unfolding them, just as Britomart in the mirror scene recoils from identity with her image. This analogy suggests that Books III-V are the mirror breaking Britomart; a suggestion fraught with implications. It would mean that in these Books Britomart appears as her image - as, indeed, she does: throughout she performs the knightly role that she adopts in the flashback's departure scene. Yet, manifestly, she is not Artegall, who remains a distinct knight. One infers that in these Books she repeats, on the large scale, the pattern of responses to her image in the flashback: identification, first violently then gently repudiated before being accepted in virtue of their heavenly essence. Even a broad survey of the text tends to support this inference. In Book III Britomart asserts herself 'at the expense' of Artegall. She is its titular heroine and its most prominent character, whereas Artegall makes no appearance in it at all. In Book IV Britomart loses her titular status and becomes less prominent, while Artegall puts in an appearance. Moreover, it brings about, or reveals, rather, their commitment to each other. Yet it maintains a contrary impetus: they clash twice over, and she opposes his quest. Britomart still predominates. In Book V Artegall assumes titular status, and with it a role as prominent as that of Britomart in Book III. Britomart appears only 'at her own expense', to expedite the quest which in Book IV she opposes. However, this pattern will be worked out later, in the last three sections of this chapter. Here we shall attend to another implication. Britomart in the guise of her image 'Artegall' and on the large scale, 'magnified', must be another Arthur; though, in view of her triple response to her likeness, one would expect a convergent resemblance.

In each of the three Books Britomart has the distinctly Arthurian role of (apparent) rescuer. In Book III she helps out Scudamour in dire straits; in Book IV she vindicates the knights of Maidenhead in Satyrane's tournament in the nick of time; and in Book V she releases Artegall from Radigund's trap. (This alignment with Arthur would, incidentally, confirm the illusoriness of her career.) Clearly, though, her Arthurian role, which enacts her identification with 'Arthegall', does not sum her up. Let us consider her Book by Book. In Book III she violently contradicts her Arthurian identity. Whereas Arthur leaves it to the Outer Books' quest heroes to deal with their cardinal antagonists, the Dragon, Acrasia, Grantorto and the Blattant Beast, Britomart tackles Scudamour's enemy, Busirane, herself. In so doing she challenges Faery Court, as the residence of evil Time,⁵³ whereas Arthur characteristically seeks Faery Court, as the residence of Gloriana. Structurally, too, she dissociates herself from Arthur as far as possible. His interventions always take place in Canto viii: there he overcomes Orgoglio (I), Cymochles and Pyrochles (II), Corflambo (IV), the Souldan (V) and Disdain (VI). By contrast, Britomart overcomes Busirane in Canto xii, at the outer edge of Book III. Besides, she is its titular heroine and, indeed, its apparent quest heroine, what with her prominence and her defeat of the magician, on the model of Red Cross, Guyon, Artegall and Calidore, as though to fill out Scudamour's defective quest. Thus she as it were sides against Arthur - though, by the same token, sharing the reverse orientation of the knights unfolding him: she can only recoil, not escape, from identity with her image. Furthermore, Spenser pointedly removes her from the four central Cantos, where, in the other Books, he locates Arthur's emergence (she is absent from iv.46 till ix.12). Even the flashback proves a counter-Arthurian protest, when compared with Arthur's retrospective account in I.ix. The latter immediately follows his intervention in aid of Red Cross, as a natural, quiet afterthought. The former long precedes Britomart's Arthurian intervention in aid of Scudamour, as an emphatic premise, disrupting the flow of the apparent narrative. Also, the order of its constituents reverses that of its

⁵³ p.103, 82.

counterparts, as though to delay her identification. Arthur mentions first his military training, which corresponds to Britomart's arming in the departure scene, then his consultation of Merlin, and lastly his dream vision of Gloriana, which corresponds to Britomart's sight of Artegall in the mirror scene (stanzas 3-4, 5, 9-15 respectively).

So in Book III Britomart's role as 'Arthegall' can hardly be detected. Arthur himself similarly belies his typical role in this Book. Yet Spenser so polarizes their equivalence as to redouble the impact of her repudiation. Arthur does not perform any rescue operation in his own Canto viii, though Florimell's captivity in the cave of Proteus provides him with a splendid opportunity. This is not a gratuitous observation. The poet himself subtly reminds us of the standard pattern so that we may register the deviation, partly through the connection he establishes between Arthur and Florimell in Canto i and partly through his final apostrophe to her: 'It yrkes me, leave thee in this wofull state' (viii.43). It would also be instructive to set the Canto's initial stanza beside its counterparts in Books I and II. Now Florimell's captivity parallels Amoret's. (Spenser mentions their predicaments in the same breath in IV.i.1.) This parallelism draws attention to the startling contrast between Arthur's miserable non-intervention and Britomart's magnificent success even as 'Arthegall'. And then, Arthur's non-intervention merely clinches his self-contradictory role. In no other Book does he appear in the opening Cantos. Again the poet hints that this cannot be a gratuitous matter of fact. Arthur's exit from the fiction occurs at precisely the same point as his earliest entry, in Book VI: Canto v, stanzas 11-12. Moreover, in Book VI he emerges with Timias emphatically regained where in Book III he disappears complaining about Timias lost. Also, within the opening Cantos Spenser focusses cruelly on that aspect of Arthur which elsewhere he mercifully leaves a marginal blur. In Florimell, the golden representative of Faery Court (i.15; v.4, 5), glory's elusiveness highlights itself. Instead of the evening star, regular harbinger of darkness, she resembles a comet that 'importunes death and dolefull drerihed' (i.16). Or, still more pointedly, Arthur chases

her 'so long that now the golden Hesperus / Was mounted high in top of heaven sheene' (iv.51),⁵⁴ only to find his pursuit thwarted by murky vapours totally obscuring her as they do Hesperus and the stars it summons. The 'sun of righteousness' goes down cursing Night (55-60), unable to sleep and thus - as stanza 53 qua verbal echo of I.ix.14 suggests - deprived even of his dreamt bliss with Gloriana. As for Britomart, she will have nothing to do with Arthur's pursuit (III.i.19). In other words, she refuses to admit to lacking glory - if only to break the 'golden chaine of concord' that ties her to the Prince and Guyon (12). She asserts herself as glory, leaving Time the mirror in pursuit of her, rather. Or, as Spenser puts it,

Yet did false Archimage her still pursew,
To bring to passe his mischievous intent,
Now that he had her singled from the crew
Of courteous knights, the Prince, and Faery gent (iv.45)

- to the bewilderment of story readers, who are bound to protest that there is no Archimago narrative for these lines to refer to. Not that Britomart's self-assertion can avail her, in armour. Indeed, her immediate exit at this point confirms her obliteration by 'Arch-image'. But it does only implicitly. Unlike Arthur she does not go wailing into that great night.

Britomart's vindication of the knights of Maidenhead, in Book IV, will seem to bear only a faint resemblance to Arthur's typical role - until, prompted by the ingathering of Priamond, Diamond and Triamond (Canto iii), one grasps that she does for Gloriana's order as a whole at one stroke what Arthur does for her individual emissaries one by one. In the Book of ἀγάπη, 'the bond of perfectnes', she infolds all the virtues.⁵⁵ Accordingly, she intervenes not in quests but in a tournament, the counterpart of the entire Faerie Queene as, implicitly, Gloriana's feast, highlighting magnificence as glory 'already'.⁵⁶ The theme of Book IV precludes any major quest; as we have seen, it reduces Scudamour's to a small-scale recollection.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ - a (deliberate) astronomical howler, one should think.

⁵⁵ p.77.

⁵⁶ See again pp.56-57.

⁵⁷ p.82, 123.

Britomart does repudiate herself as 'Arthegall'; not, however, as in Book III, by countering Arthur even as she models herself on him but, on the contrary, by 'overgoing' him. She as it were tacitly compresses the poem's 'lay-out'. Arthur substitutes for titular heroes to deal with enemies of theirs. Britomart substitutes for those of Book IV to deal with themselves as their own enemies: she defeats Cambel and Triamond (iv.44-45). For they focus the titular heroes generally as unfolding Arthur, in being two and in Triamond's 'lapse' from Telamond. Spenser expresses the new relationship between Britomart and 'Arthegall' also structurally. While, as in Book III, she intervenes four Cantos away from Canto viii, here she does not on the Book's outer edge but on the very threshold of its middle four Cantos, as though only just checking her own emergence as Arthur there. But how about Britomart and Artegall? Surely her overthrow of him cannot be construed as mild repudiation? It can. True, her antagonism is explicit - as explicit as his orientation 'from glory'. His motto, 'salvagesse sans finesse' (39), conveys commitment to 'silva (the material world) without end'. And he sides against the knights of Maidenhead in their tournament of glory, 'till evening, that the Sunne gan downward bend' (43). However, far more striking - except to literal readers - is the fact that Britomart actually finds (herself in) Artegall, imitating precisely even as she reverses his own intervention in the tournament.

Arthur, in Book IV, overgoes himself. In the Outer Books he substitutes for a single knight. Here he intercedes on behalf of Placidus as Amyas, to champion the cause of infolding. Moreover, just as Satyrane's tournament corresponds to The Faerie Queene envisaged 'perfect in one', so the slaying of Corflambo as it were 'ends' the poem. Arthur

smote at him with all his might and maine,
So furiously, that ere he wist, he found
His head before him tombling on the ground.
The whiles his babling tongue did yet blaspheme
And curse his God, that did him so confound;
The whiles his life ran foorth in bloudie streame,
His soule descended downe into the Stygian reame. (viii.45)

This echoes unmistakably the closing lines of two model epics, Virgil's and Ariosto's, depicting the deaths of Turnus and Rodomonte:

ast illi solvuntur frigore membra
vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.

Alle squalide ripe d'Acheronte,
Sciolta dal corpo più freddo che ghiaccio,
Bestemmiando fuggì l'anima sdegnosa
Che fu sì altiera al mondo e sì orgogliosa.

Another consideration strengthens the Virgilian link: like Corflambo, Turnus perishes specifically as an enemy to friendship. Aeneas, about to relent, inflicts the mortal blow when, suddenly, he realizes that the Rutulian king wears the baldrick of his own dear ally and companion, Pallas, whom he had slain. It is as another Pallas that Aeneas finishes off his antagonist.⁵⁸ Arthur, Spenser's counterpart to Virgil's hero generally, appears nowhere more conclusively so than in Book IV. Nor does the poet fail to work in the corollary. With Turnus defeated nothing prevents the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia. So one would expect that in the Legend where Corflambo meets his death Arthur has free access to Gloriana. Accordingly, in vii.42 he has apparently forgotten about his search, as we noted in Chapter One.⁵⁹ Under the rubric of friendship he already needs to seek no longer. Or, to vary the metaphor as Spenser does, here, uniquely, his renewed search, after his intervention, does not take him out of the fiction (ix.17ff.). He travels in the company of Amoret, to signify glory present, just as in the preceding Book he vainly pursues Florimell, to signify glory absent. That Amoret is a trifle apprehensive and that Arthur seeks at all qualifies friendship as still virtue and not quite heaven.

But of course the superlative character of Arthur's performance remains implicit. Indeed, ostensibly he underplays. His typical action, the slaying of Corflambo, occurs in Canto viii, as in the Outer Books. However, here it appears to be merely the prelude to the resolution of his beneficiaries' plight, not the resolution itself. He settles their affairs in Canto ix, beyond the central Cantos, where he normally emerges. Or rather, he unsettles them, marrying the squire of low degree to Poëana, not to his own Aemyllia, 'daughter unto a Lord of high degree' (vii.15), as the fiction qua

⁵⁸ Aeneid XII.951-52; Orlando Furioso XLVI.140 // Aeneid XII.942 (balteus et notis ... cingula bullis); 948-49 (Pallas te hoc volnere, Pallas / immolat).

⁵⁹ p.50.

story both demands and allows (ix.15). Reading allegorically, one can see why he acts as he does and also why, oddly, he arouses no protest. Amyas and AEmylia cannot be united because his low estate and her high estate, Time and Eternity, are incompatible. Amyas, as Placidus, stands for friendship, placid identification of separate souls, as against Corflambo, the contagious fever of lust. Poeana loses her father, but she cannot help being his daughter. That is, she represents the condition of separateness as it provides the opportunity for friendship but even so, inevitably, for its travesty lust as well. (Arthur actually 'revives' Corflambo - see stanza 4.) In Poeana we see togetherness as penalty, 'poena'; yet also, far more emphatically, as 'Paeon', hymn of triumph to Apollo, the sun of righteousness, as though virtue's battle were already over. Hence her marriage, complementing that of Scudamour and Amoret (i.2). Nevertheless, the impression that Arthur bungles his job prevails. As a result he still contrasts, though only mildly, with Britomart, who makes herself superlatively Arthurian for all to see. Her intervention, even more than his, appears to be merely the prelude to its aftermath, in Cantos v and vi. But these Cantos are within the domain of Arthur emergent. And although they do not provide a resolution, this is in spite of Britomart's stance, not because of it. Spenser neatly clinches their relation in Canto ix, where he meets her as, together with Scudamour, she opposes Druon cum suis. He unhesitatingly takes her part. They are also alike in their fundamentally pacific intentions (31, 32, 35). Yet having learnt about the cause of the quarrel, the tournament, Arthur finds against Britomart and proceeds to scold her (37). She does not answer back, though, but, with peace in sight, allows herself to be put in the wrong - as she does structurally by performing her quintessentially Arthurian intervention on the wrong side of the Book's centre. Thus its distance from his, like its location per se, symbolizes acceptance of 'Arthegall' even in repudiation.

Nowhere is Britomart's role more strikingly Arthurian than in Book V. She substitutes for its titular hero. And the poet has so organized her fiction as to suggest that she does nothing else. The Dolon episode and the Temple of Isis episode (vi.19 - vii.24) are embedded in her rescue operation, as though they were incidental

stages. (In reality they do not forward or halt it any more than the quest heroes' manifold adventures do their quests proper.) Besides, her intervention occurs towards the end of Canto vii, as closely as possible, within the four middle Cantos, to Arthur's Canto viii. Only one thing distinguishes her crucially from the typical Arthur: she overthrows a female, Radigund. In other words, she suppresses womanhood, the symbol of glory. Similarly, she reverses Artegall's sexual transformation, itself paradoxically shameful. Thus her gut reaction 'to glory' in fact orients her 'from glory'. Exactly the same applies to Arthur in Book V. True, he does not literally overthrow a female. But his Arthurian adventure amounts to the same thing. In the confrontation with the Souldan he does not substitute for Artegall. Instead they perform side by side; a fact brought out by their introductory pursuit of Samient, whose name means 'going together'. Uniquely Arthur does not infold the quest hero precisely where his name advertizes their identity, just as Britomart cannot embrace him as manifestly identifying himself with her sex. And to block infolding is to be oriented 'from glory'. Again, in the Souldan, evidently modelled on Phaeton (40),⁶⁰ Arthur extinguishes a premature and destructive 'sun of righteousness'. For God Himself is Souldan, 'soul damn(ation)', in that He justly condemns the sinner to death - except that, for the Time being, 'he maketh his sunne to arise on the evil, and the good',⁶¹ thus offering Time for repentance. The Souldan stands for Time itself trying to precipitate justice in its glory (Samient calls him 'Elfe' - 19). He embodies the proverb summum jus, summa injuria; whence his wife, Adicia. Arthur defeats him by means of what signals their glorious identity, his own 'sunlike shield' (41) of faith, delaying the manifestation of his essence. Accordingly, Artegall celebrates him as a setting sun, in the portals of night:

Then caused he the gates be opened wyde,
And there the Prince, as victour of that day,
With tryumph entertayn'd and glorifyde.

Adicia as yet remains, metamorphosed into a mad tiger roaming the

⁶⁰ Ovid, Metamorphoses II.

⁶¹ Matthew 5.45.

woods, apparently 'salvagesse sans finesse'. Furthermore, Samient, whom Arthur meets after freeing her from one of her evil pursuers, unmistakably resembles Florimell, whom he chases in vain in Book III. Both are terrified damsels fleeing on a palfrey, with loose hair and eyes cast backward (compare V.viii.4 and III.i.15-16). The resemblance sets off the difference. We do not hear that Samient's horse is 'milk-white', spotless, like Florimell's, nor that her locks are yellow. Her garments are 'all to rent' rather than 'all ... wrought of beaten gold'. In short, she obliterates Florimell's glory. But then, she represents Mercilla, not Gloriana. And Mercilla, who is as accessible to Arthur as Gloriana is unattainable, symbolizes justice tempered with mercy or, to be exact, the Day of Judgement temporized as mercy, 'from glory' (hence the Souldan's hostility). She appears as though 'in the cloudes of heaven with power and great glorie' to preside over a trial, like the Son of Man on the Last Day (V.ix.27-29).⁶² Yet enter Arthur and Artegall, and she promptly softens 'that Majestie and awe',

As the bright sunne, what time his fierie teme
Towards the westerne brim begins to draw,
Gins to abate the brightnesse of his beme,
And fervour of his flames somewhat adaw. (35)

Up for trial is Duessa, false Una. So already 'mercie and trueth ... mete',⁶³ for the criminal gets executed (x.4). Yet even so the judge 'would not let just vengeance on her light' - a paradox incapable of literal resolution. Tears drop from 'her faire lampes of light', presumably dimming their glory. And she covers her face with 'her purple pall', which associates her at once with lack-lustre Prays-desire (ix.50, 28, and II.ix.37), as do her angels with their wholly 'purpled wings' (compare and contrast IV.x.42).⁶⁴ All this goes to show that in Book V Spenser orients Arthur 'from glory' with the same emphasis as he does Britomart. As a result from Book III to Book V they as it were converge within equivalence.

⁶² Matthew 24.30.

⁶³ Psalm 85.10 - the same verse in which justice and peace kiss (compare p.79).

⁶⁴ See again p.42, 124.

III Busirane Revisited

The preceding section has drawn attention to Britomart's magnificent success as 'Arthegall' in Book III as against Arthur's uncharacteristically low profile. Their contrast may seem so stark as to preclude equivalence. Also, her performance apparently undermines the interpretation of the Busirane Cantos, in Chapter Two, as symbolic of glory emphatically 'not yet'. How does she nevertheless fall into place? Simple logic tells us where to look for the answer. Britomart's achievement as 'Arthegall' implies that she finds (herself in) Artegall. Yet in Book III the fiction does not bear this out, as it does, variously, in Books IV and V. In other words, it denies or reverses her (self-)discovery, like the mirror in the flashback. Taken by itself this logical argument could be dismissed as dubious manoeuvring of non-evidence. After all, Britomart is not looking for Artegall at this particular juncture. For, surely, the brief mention, in the 1590 ending, of how she envies Scudamour and Amoret (46) cannot mean that she had hoped to find him by reuniting them? It does - though not, of course, literally. Spenser makes the point indirectly, through his source, Orlando Furioso II.31 - IV.50. Britomart comes upon Scudamour complaining about Amoret's fate at the hands of Busirane in much the same way that Bradamante comes upon Pinabello complaining about his lady's fate at the hands of Atlante. And just as Bradamante tackles Atlante, so Britomart gets to grips with Busirane. Again, alike victorious, they both spare their antagonists, though both magicians are compelled to destroy their prisons. One notable difference, though, is Bradamante's motivation. She attacks Atlante in order to free her own lover, Ruggiero, whom, as she hears from Pinabello, Atlante has captured too. Now one could, of course, tacitly agree that this difference does not call for comment, on the assumption that Spenser simply has his own tale to tell. But if so, why should he have gone out of his way to make it so like Ariosto's in other respects? Can the resemblance be regarded as an involuntary and gratuitous echo, resulting from long familiarity with the Italian romance? Surely only as a last resort. The odds are that Spenser, with his usual controlled and conscious artistry, evokes his source as a guide, so that we may

infer that Britomart frees Artegall from Busirane as Bradamante frees Ruggiero from Atlante. True, this achievement would be so utterly elusive as not to happen at all, literally - yet hardly more so than that of her counterpart: no sooner is Ruggiero delivered from Atlante's castle than he is carried off on Atlante's hippogriff. Spenser leaves Britomart's vacuous liberation of Artegall implicit merely so as to preserve her polar opposition to Arthur. Narrated explicitly it would inevitably have become the Cantos' focus at the expense of Amoret's release, which sets off Florimell's captivity in Arthur's Canto viii. Besides, in providing a tantalizing glimpse of Artegall it would have aligned Britomart manifestly with Arthur in his vain pursuit of Florimell in Canto iv. The overt contrast hides deep equivalence: it does not cancel it out, though.

However, Spenser diverges in other ways from his source too; a fact which may well be thought to rule out its normative function. Bradamante's clash with Atlante takes place outside his enchanted palace. Ariosto has nothing to correspond to Spenser's elaborate description of the interior of Busirane's castle, which through its prominence and poetic impact almost overshadows Britomart's confrontation with the magician itself. Moreover, Scudamour and Pinabello are opposite extremes as moral beings. The former is one of Gloriana's noble quest heroes and, indeed, calculated to arouse more powerfully than any of the others the reader's sympathy, in his despairing commitment to a task beyond him through no fault of his own. By contrast, the latter

tra sua gente scelerata solo
Leale esser non volse né cortese,
Ma ne le vizii abominandi e brutti
Non pur gli altri adegno, ma passò tutti.⁶⁵

A deadly enemy to Bradamante's family, he attempts to wreck the rescue operation as soon as he has gathered her identity, trapping her in what fortunately turns out to be Merlin's cavern, where she hears, or rather sees, a prophecy about her descendants. Spenser has no story of treachery and imitates the prophecy in Canto iii, not in the Busirane episode. Given Scudamour's moral stature, should we

⁶⁵ Orlando Furioso II.58.

not accept as perfectly appropriate Britomart's apparently disinterested intervention, instead of attributing to her Bradamante's more self-regarding motives, creditable though these are?

We should do no such thing. On the contrary, these other discrepancies are likewise to be taken as pointers to the fiction's theme, chastity. In removing Ariosto's prophecy and introducing the description of the castle interior Spenser hints that the latter substitutes for the former. This is certainly the case structurally. Both occupy the central position in between scenes of befriending and of victorious struggle. Also, both are alike in being set pieces, strongly enumerative in character and manifestly framed off from the story. We infer that the Busirane episode 'ought to' have featured a prophecy. Indeed, it ought to, being about love in Time, which is as a matter of fact prophetic of its eternal consummation. But then, Busirane stands for Time as though it were an ultimate, virtually screening off the transcendent perspective. It stands to reason that he will replace the overt prophecy in Ariosto by the tapestries and the mask, within his domain: they are as seemingly unprophetic as he can make them. Ariosto's prophecy takes refuge in the flashback's middle scene, qua thematic prelude to Book IV the only locus in Book III that could logically accommodate it. The castle interior is Merlin's prophecy weighted in malum.

Conversely, Scudamour is Pinabello weighted in bonum. He betrays Britomart symbolically. His predicament presents itself to her as an opportunity to join forces with him as Arthur does with Artegall in Book V, the Legend where her identification with 'Arthegall' becomes complete. However, Scudamour's inability to pass through the flaming porch proves at once that they are not Sam-ient. He wrecks her intervention in failing to be Artegall to her qua Arthur. She loses Artegall in him precisely as, taking over alone, she infolds him.⁶⁶ In fact her own orientation against Time, 'to glory', betrays her. Scudamour and Britomart are polarized as traitor and victim, but within equivalence. Indeed,

⁶⁶ Compare p.164.

their equivalence receives all the emphasis. Britomart does not even register the loss of Scudamour, just as she lets slip Artegall only implicitly. Scudamour, for his part, is a most reluctant traitor. He repeatedly tries to dissuade her from attempting the impossible (xi.16-17, 19, 24), making sure that she takes his point:

What monstrous enmity provoke we heare,
Foolhardy as th'Earthes children, the which made
Battell against the Gods? so we a God invade. (22)

She sees the adventure as 'prooffe of last extremity' (18) or 'extremities of chaunce' (24). Again, Scudamour's 'huge impatience' (27) must be on account of his failure to stand by her rather than of his own lack of success per se, which is, after all, no new experience to him and at worst only halves Britomart's chances of success. (Or does he, perhaps, resent her success? This alternative will appeal only to those with a lingering bias against Scudamour.) He tries desperately to be Artegall 'to glory' - a contradiction in terms. Yet one cannot but infer that he is in effect another Pinabello, and a worse one, since in letting Britomart down he lets her in for exposure to Busirane's unprophetic enchantments, little though these affect her (50; xii.2, 29). Paradoxically Spenser's striking departures from his Italian model, which at first sight prompt us to discard it as a merely partial, uninformative analogue, on closer inspection vindicate its status as a norm for interpretation.

While the polarisation of Scudamour and Britomart as traitor and victim remains implicit, their polarisation as champions of Amoret could hardly be more obvious. Nevertheless, it merely hides their equivalence as such. Britomart does not annihilate Busirane as Red Cross and Artegall do the Dragon and Grantorto. She leads him captive as Guyon does Acrasia. Worse, whereas Acrasia is put 'in chaines of adamant' (II.xii.82) and conveyed to Faery Court 'with a strong gard, all reskew to prevent' (III.i.2), we never learn that Busirane is similarly secured. He just vanishes from the fiction, unaccountably. This is rather disquieting: whereas the disposal of Acrasia virtually coincides with the end of the Guyon narrative, Busirane's disappearance by no means heralds the end of the Britomart narrative. Its continuation suggests that she must face him all over again. Busirane is the prime evil in Book IV as in Book III, though

only by implication: friendship makes Time's impact almost negligible. In her qualified victory Britomart complements exactly Scudamour as he gives her up - betrayal again - only to release himself from his paralysed heroism into 'further aide' (xii.45).⁶⁷ Or is this to attach unwarranted significance to Busirane's mere survival? Spenser has him utterly at Britomart's mercy:

So mightily she smote him, that to ground
He fell halfe dead; next stroke him should have slaine,
Had not the Lady, which by him stood bound,
Dernely unto her called to abstaine,
From doing him to dy. For else her paine
Should be remedillesse, sith none but hee,
Which wrought it, could the same recure againe.
Therewith she stayd her hand, loth stayd to bee;
For life she him envyde, and long'd revenge to see. (34)

Calling her victory 'qualified' may seem voulu. Admittedly, one wonders why she does not finish him off once he has carried out her order 'his charmes backe to reverse' (36). Yet, reassuringly, the poet does not say that he escapes, like Atlante.⁶⁸ But then, we have just learnt to regard Ariosto as normative. Besides, Britomart's omission is strictly in accordance with Amoret's anxious request that Busirane should live. To be sure, this appears to mean merely that he should not be killed precipitately. Yet that is not what she actually says. One gathers that to kill him at all is to kill him precipitately. Heavenly love does indeed have Time at its mercy. However, it does not by precipitating Eternity but, on the contrary, by condescending to exist, disguised as chastity, within Time. Britomart cannot 'rescue' Amoret. Her role intimates that Busirane, in forcing himself upon Amoret and apparently reducing her to hopeless resistance, in fact works her release even so. Hence the picture of the enchanter reluctantly dispelling his magic under Britomart's threatening sword and thus restoring Amoret to perfect health (36-38). His evil domination of Amoret disguises self-effacing commitment. It is not for nothing that he has been modelled on Atlante, whose efforts to obstruct Ruggiero's marital fate are motivated by genuine protective love and who, in his death through

⁶⁷ See p.111.

⁶⁸ Orlando Furioso IV.39.

grief at their futility, positively paves the way for his foster child's union with Bradamante, as a voice from the sepulchre.⁶⁹
Busirane is the noble Atlante weighted in malum.

For Britomart to kill Busirane would have been to belie Amoret, and hence herself as Amoret's champion. Her violent intentions, pointedly roused by the wound he inflicts upon her (33), which brings home her equivalence to Amoret, parallel her recoil from identification with her mirror image. Love must indeed oppose Time, by its very nature, but that means first of all, in order of presentation, suffer Time in opposition. It is Britomart in Book III, not Scudamour in Book IV, whom Hieatt should have accused of overboldness.⁷⁰ The context of their exploits supports this. Whereas Womanhood's rebuke of Scudamour in the Temple of Venus is virtually overruled by the smiles of the goddess, nothing qualifies the inscriptions above the doors in the House of Busirane, enjoining Britomart to 'be bold', certainly, yet also to 'be not too bold' (xi.54). Hill traces these injunctions to Ovid's myth of Venus and Adonis, as rendered by Golding:

she warned also thee

Adonis ... if thou wouldst have warned bee.
Bee bold on cowards (Venus sayd) for whoso dooth advaunce
Himselfe against the bold, may hap too meete with sum mischaunce.
Wherefore I pray thee my sweete boy forbeare too bold to bee.⁷¹

Her article misses the real implication of this discovery, though. Through his source Spenser makes Britomart another Adonis; an identification that falls into place as soon as we grasp that her counterpart Amoret, as the epitome of the Garden of Adonis, is another Adonis too. However, it clashes with the fact that Britomart, unlike Ovid's Adonis, heeds the warning of Venus, as unriddled by Amoret, if only just - of course she does, being another Venus as well.⁷² Perverse imitation? By no means. One must infer that

⁶⁹ Orlando Furioso IV.29, XXXVI.64-66.

⁷⁰ See pp.90-91.

⁷¹ 'Britomart and Be Bold, Be Not Too Bold', ELH, 38 (1971), 173-87 (p.174); Metamorphoses X.626-30 (542-45 in the Latin).

⁷² p.138.

she escapes the fate of Adonis in suffering it. In Book III Britomart cannot but stand for chastity, which cures, more obviously 'not yet' than 'already', generation, Man's mortal wound 'sub inguine' ('in his codds'),⁷³ from which he lies dead in separateness. How true it is of this virtue that it rescues love 'after long sorrow, in the end', as the Letter to Raleigh puts it with seemingly mindless emphasis (L128). Britomart and Scudamour, though polar opposites, are indeed equivalent.

IV The Grand Encounter

Section II of this chapter has outlined the thematic rationale of Britomart's role in Books III-V. It remains for close reading to clinch the argument that her story as such is illusory. Book III requires no great effort. Her adventures there are even more obviously disconnected than those of the Outer Books' titular heroes. They are not stages in a search for Artegall any more than Arthur's recurrent interventions in each of the Books are stages in a search for Gloriana.⁷⁴ Only when viewed together do Books III-V suggest that Britomart progresses towards her destined lover. It is Book IV that creates this impression, just as it is the middle scene of the flashback that gives it the appearance of a developing mini-story: friendship, glory 'already', involves a strong illusion of narrative, which acts as a bond.⁷⁵ Even so their first meeting, in Canto iv, could hardly be called the outcome of any search. Not that Spenser provides an alternative reason for their participation in Satyrane's tournament. They both appear as bolts out of the blue, rushing in from nowhere and for no given reason. One might feel entitled to infer that Britomart somehow got wind of Satyrane's proclamation (ii.26) and held herself in knightly duty bound to procure Florimell's girdle for 'his' Amoret. Surely the poet need not spell out everything? But then, in Canto v she allows the false Florimell to snatch it from Amoret without protest (19-20), which

⁷³ Metamorphoses X.715 (839).

⁷⁴ pp.49-50.

⁷⁵ p.79, 112-13, 147, 153.

argues little sense of public honour. Also, her last minute entry looks incongruous. One would have expected her to participate from the start, like the other knights. If, for some reason, she could not make it in time, this explanation should be in the text; we cannot just invent it. This applies to Artegall as well. Besides, he does not even have a lady of his own to vindicate: he wishes Blandamour's false Florimell, 'rightful' winner of the girdle, to be assigned to him (v.21). Indeed, he has no story at all before his intervention. For his appearance in Ryence's mirror is not his doing, nor does it reflect him as engaged in any datable action. Our metaphorical interpretation may stand. That both Artegall and Britomart turn up at the last moment highlights friendship as the virtue to end all virtues. That they clash reminds us that 'yet the end is not', as Merlin had said (III.iii.50) - or, as Spenser puts it here, 'so nought may be esteemed happie till the end' (IV.iv.43).⁷⁶

However, to qualify as a separate allegory the tournament scene must be discontinuous at both ends. Now who could deny that it leads up to the judgement scene in Canto v; in other words, that 'yet the end is not' in narrative terms? Even the judgement scene itself does not wind up the story but remains open-ended. As soon as she senses that the knights are going to fall out among themselves, Britomart 'upon her first adventure forth did ride, / To seeke her lov'd' (29). Does this not imply that her involvement with Satyrane is, as its unsatisfactory outcome now reminds her, a distraction from her search? Again, how can we explain Artegall's attempt at revenge in Canto vi if not with reference to his defeat at her hands in Canto iv and the judges' confirmation of her victory in Canto v, considered as previous events? Moreover, in Britomart's recognition of Artegall Spenser would seem to be making explicit its temporal link with the flashback itself:

When Britomart with sharpe avizefull eye
Beheld the lovely face of Artegall ...
She gan eftsoones it to her mind to call, -
To be the same which in her fathers hall
Long since in that enchaunted glasse she saw. (26)

⁷⁶ p.77, 149.

To answer the first query we should ponder the conditions of the

solemne feast, with publike turneyng,
To which all knights with them their Ladies are to bring.

And of them all she that is fayrest found,
Shall have that golden girdle for reward,
And of those Knights who is most stout on ground,
Shall to that fairest Ladie be prefard. (ii.26-27)

This is odd. One can see that every knight would wish himself to be acknowledged as the strongest and his lady as the fairest. But usually, by romance convention, a knight's strength is regarded as itself the measure of his lady's beauty.⁷⁷ Not so at Satyrane's festival, where the two are to be assessed independently. The knights are as ready to present their ladies for inspection at the beauty contest (v.10-11) as they are to join in the tournament. This rules out that the latter precedes the former. No knight, once beaten, could wish his lady to be chosen in the certain knowledge that as her champion he will be supplanted. No knight, coming out on top, would run the risk of having to abandon his own lady. Nor, for that matter, could the ladies' desire to win the girdle be totally unaffected, positively or negatively, by their feelings about the victorious knight. Yet nothing suggests that it is not. Actually, one wonders why they consent to having the victor imposed on them at all. According to the code of chivalry to ladies 'the world this franchise ever yeilded, / That of their loves choise they might freedom clame' (ix.37). Moreover, they have prior commitments, which they could not ignore without dishonour. As a two-stage event Satyrane's festival is a monstrous absurdity. Nobody could want to take part in it unless they should all know that the strongest knight already serves the fairest lady, so that there will be no embarrassing adjustment in the event. But they could not possibly know this if it should be the case. And, in fact, it is not: false Florimell outshines even Amoret (v.13-14). Nor does this complete the list of incongruities. How can you allot a girdle that has itself the power to decide who shall wear it (16-19)?

⁷⁷ e.g. Sidney's story of Phalantus, in Book I of The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia, edited by Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge, 1912; rpt. 1969), pp.96-97.

And why does Blandamour, 'who thought he had the trew / And very Florimell' (13), not at once present her to Satyrane, claim the girdle for her as of right, and insist that he should cancel both tournament and beauty contest? To judge from the universal failure to question her identity, his demand would certainly have been met. The festival ought not to have happened. Its outcome, false Florimell's free choice of the non-combatant Braggadochio, is not only hilariously funny but, on the face of it, a supremely just denunciation of the whole enterprise.

Canto v does not follow on from Canto iv. It is a timeless allegory. The ladies, in their eagerness for the girdle, are not pitted against each other as rival persons. On the contrary, even as competitors they are 'many one' in their manifestly celestial beauty, which the poet cannot describe for want of a 'golden pen' (12). Thus they stand for friendship as glory 'already', as they do in their patently just aspiration to the golden, circular prize, attribute of 'Dame Venus ... What time she usd to live in wively sort' (3), Venus Androgyne: a symbol of Eternity. True, it will not fit any one of them (17). Even Amoret can wear it only 'at last' (19). Yet this uncomfortable fact is nothing worse than a mortifying joke (18), which complements Busirane's abduction of Amoret qua mad prank and Merlin's feigned lack of penetration.⁷⁸ Their inferiority to false Florimell conveys the same qualification. For they are inferior. Her artificiality does not imply that she is a showpiece of cosmetics, unattractive to the truly discerning eye, attuned to natural beauty.⁷⁹ 'All that her saw with wonder ravisht weare' (14), not excluding Britomart. Her preference for Amoret's 'virtuous government' involves no negation of the other's 'beauties wonderment' (20) nor a suspicion of vice. It intimates that even as friendship love, though almost heaven, remains still virtue. Florimell is fake in that she asserts Eternity in Time. She is too beautiful to be true - whence the Homeric simile of the 'guilefull Goldsmith' (15). She 'shone as Phebes light, / Amongst the lesser starres in evening

⁷⁸ p.113, 152.

⁷⁹ Compare p.34, 128-29.

cleare' (14), vastly improving on Gloriana qua Hesperus at the centre of Arthur's Τελαμών (I.vii.30).⁸⁰ That is why all take her for the real thing, true Florimell, 'yet thought that Florimell was not so faire as shee' (IV.v.14) - literally a fine illogicality. Similarly, through the apparent justice of her implicit denunciation of Satyrane's festival Spenser symbolizes love as though already beyond virtue militant. Not that we should not despise Braggadochio and side with those prepared for a trial of strength. Significantly, however, their efforts are gratuitous: Britomart and Triamond, the jousting with the greatest prominence in Book IV, need not fight for a reward they already claim to possess in their own Amoret and Canacee (20-21). By way of complementary metaphor the poet sends Britomart on her search for Artegall again only to stress that in their very clash 'he was unto her selfe most nie' (29), instead of yielding to the 'neede, / [Her] hard adventures and strange haps to tell', 'here' and 'now' (28).

Canto vi does not follow on from Canto v any more than Canto v follows on from Canto iv. Artegall's revenge may seem to make perfect literal sense. He has a motive for his action. However, both motive and action are ignoble. Since the judges decided correctly that he did not win in the tournament and therefore does not deserve the prize, he has no just cause for complaint. His grudge is most unknighly. And in seeking private satisfaction, by ambushing Britomart, instead of arguing his case, such as it is, publicly, he himself commits the 'foule despiht' of which he so unjustifiably holds her guilty (vi.5). Can this be our patron of justice, fitting partner for blameless Britomart? Can it be that her progress towards marital felicity turns upon the spiteful treachery of her destined husband? Furthermore, considering his recent experience of Britomart's well-nigh effortless superiority in battle, it is odd that Artegall never forms a realistic estimate of his chances of success; still more so that he suddenly proves to be more than a match for her (16-18). Indeed, his base, imprudent attack would seem useless as an attempt to find compensation for his loss 'both of victors meede, / And eke of honour' (v.9): there are no spectators

⁸⁰ p.77, n.5.

to witness his come-back, while Britomart does not have her prize. Ironically, he would have gained it, had he not left the judgement scene in high dudgeon (21). His grievance is largely imaginary. And then, Britomart presumably recognizes the Salvage Knight as the first opponent she overthrew in the tournament, since he still wears his distinctive disguise (vi.5). Knowing that he was not there to receive false Florimell, she could easily guess the reason for his hostility. Why, then, does she not beg for a parley, to put him in the picture? It is not as though, taken completely by surprise, she has no opportunity. Artegall allows Scudamour, who has meanwhile joined him, to attack her first (9-10). And even Scudamour's attack hardly qualifies as a blind onslaught, which leaves her no option:⁸¹

soone as she him saw approaching neare
With so fell rage, her selfe she lightly gan
To dight, to welcome him, well as she can.

If she has time to prepare herself, she must have time to eschew the clash, in a lance fight on horseback. Her failure to do so passes credibility, if she should recognize Scudamour - as she must, since Artegall does too (3). After all, quite unlike Artegall, Scudamour is her protégé, on whose behalf she has rescued Amoret from Busirane and whom she now seeks. Since she was 'stonisht sore' on finding him absent after her defeat of the magician (III.xii.45), she ought to be totally bewildered by his turning against her and desperate to stop him. Instead she wipes him out with careless indifference in less than a stanza. Nor does she, subsequently, demand an explanation for his double folly. On the contrary, he, without courting forgiveness at all, demands news of Amoret, 'without offence', that is, well aware of being offensive (IV.vi.34). It is Artegall who 'pardon her besought his errour frayle, / That had done outrage in so high degree' (22), prompted by her sex - strangely, since inability to see through her disguise would be the one thing for which he need not blame himself. Equally strangely, Britomart continues severe, instead of thankfully accepting his apologies for her own sake, survival with honour. Worse, she tries hard to keep up a pretence of severity even after she has discovered that the

⁸¹ - despite the concession on p.116.

Salvage Knight is none other than her own Artegall (27, 29, 32). One should think that she, who has allegedly been seeking him for so long, ought to be even more anxious to desist, aghast at the nearly fatal manner in which Providence has brought them together and oblivious of his mean revenge. True, Spenser does not ascribe her stance to lingering anger on that account. He provides a more absurd alternative. She keeps him at arm's length as an importunate suitor, 'fall of wrath for that late stroke', which revealed her sex, and 'threatning to strike, unlesse he would withstand' (23).

As always, literal incongruity serves to ensure symbolic interpretation. Artegall's revenge does not express personal spite. It complements the spuriousness of Florimell and Britomart's renunciation, highlighting these as the need for virtue militant, in accordance with his orientation 'from glory' (here brought out by his literally dishonourable behaviour). Even so, in 'getting even' with Britomart, he mirrors her manifestly rather than obscurely, so that her identification outweighs her repudiation. The grand encounter is an emphatic variant of their encounter in the tournament, where Spenser does not so much advertize their similarity in opposition as prevent Artegall's defeat, which belies it, from having any serious impact, by keeping the scene minimally short, making no mention of his mortification and ignoring the dramatic irony of the clash instead of marking it rhetorically as in Canto vi (16-17). Since the episodes are thus equivalent, we need not postulate any sudden increase in Artegall's strength and skill or, lame alternative, attribute the more successful result to (providential) luck. Again, his attack on Britomart to deprive her of the lady-prize she has already ceded matches her gratuitous participation in the festival, in reverse. Of course, he does not know that Florimell has been assigned to him, or he would not have fought. But his ignorance is not contingent and remediable. It corresponds to his ignorance of his British nationality (III.iii.26), as a metaphor synonymous with his disposition to militancy. That explains why Britomart does not enlighten him. Instead she fights back, reasserting her claim 'to glory', which is in effect vindicated by his stroke 'toward th'end' (IV.vi.18). 'Her ventayle shard away ... her angels face, unseene afore, / Like to the ruddie morne appeared in sight' (19), as when Merlin sees through her

disguise (III.iii.20). But this analogy draws attention to Artegall's imperceptiveness, a parallel to his ignorance. Like Merlin he should have 'descryde ... her selfe' without exposing it. That is why he craves pardon. However, his apologetic worship (IV.vi.22) merely confirms his orientation 'from glory': he overadjusts, treating Britomart as heaven itself. She must resist this identification as false Florimell. After all, as friendship she represents only the dawn of Eternity. Indeed, her long locks resembling sunbeams (III.ix.20), which crown the glory of her sex,⁸² merely form 'a golden border' (IV.vi.20), like the gold frets of Prays-desire's skirt and of Artegall's armour (II.ix.37 and III.ii.25). Hence her insistence that he should continue fighting. His determined submission, with his helmet covering his face, mirrors 'beyond recognition' her determined militancy, with her face revealed, so that her stance conveys violent repudiation. But this is only a fleeting reminiscence of Book III, like Merlin's pretended failure to take Glauce's point (III.iii.17). Artegall submits only to have his beaver raised (IV.vi.25), which, in prompting her to relent almost completely, makes him recognisably like Britomart with 'her ventayle shard away' (19). True, it makes him even so a replica of his appearance in Ryence's mirror, in armour but with his 'ventayle lifted up' (III.ii.24). Actually, it is to ensure this perception that Spenser makes her remember her experience 'in her fathers hall / Long since' (IV.vi.26). The implication, that she has forgotten all about it, invalidates literal reading: the notion of a progressive search hinges on the assumption that she has been treasuring his picture in her mind all along. The poet's reference back explodes sequentiality even as it seems to establish it. It marries the Middle Books into separateness, like the wedding of Scudamour and Amoret.⁸³ Its thematic function is to reduce Artegall qua Britomart in reverse to, metaphorically, a dim memory, only just distinct enough to be complemented by her mild repudiation.

⁸² 'But if a woman have long heere, it is a praise (δόξα) unto her' (I Corinthians 11.15). Britomart is too precisely meaningful to qualify as an archetypal blonde.

⁸³ See p.113.

It may seem that Britomart soon gives up her opposition altogether. She allows Artegall to woo her and consents to marry him (41). Significantly, however, they do not in fact get married - 'significantly', because nothing literally prevents the immediate consummation of their love. To be sure, Britomart still has to fulfil her vow to Scudamour to seek and avenge Amoret (38), while Artegall still has to get his quest in aid of Irena out of the way (42). But these tasks cannot be regarded as prior commitments. Neither appears to be in a hurry to undertake them, for they do not set out until after 'they had long time there taken rest'. Yet neither, as far as we can tell, experiences any conflict of love versus duty. Artegall seems keen 'to follow that, which he did long propound'. At least, he expresses no regret on having to leave Britomart. And she, so far from appreciating and easing by her acquiescence his supposed emotional dilemma, mindful of her own, is utterly reluctant to let him go and clings to him a long part of the way (44-46), apparently oblivious of Scudamour nor reminded of him by the more dutiful Artegall. The gratuitousness of the wedding's postponement aptly suggests friendship as the end even as the end is not yet. The tasks do not cause delay. They define it symbolically, as virtue for the Time being ('for vertues onely sake' - 46). Artegall's readiness to embark on his mission bears out his orientation 'from glory'. As justice he has no wish 'the time for to delay' (45). In fact he does, like friendship, but unlike friendship he thus eclipses heaven. Britomart's opposition would convey violent rather than mild repudiation, were it not that she accompanies him. They are manifestly at one in contrariness. Nevertheless, she orients herself against him. In other words, even as she appears to forsake Scudamour, she shares his orientation towards Amoret. Her two commitments are identical, polarized within equivalence. Artegall exerts the stronger pull. Already she finds herself in him. Yet Scudamour still prevails. As the quest hero of Book IV he appropriately commands her allegiance in that Book, relegating Artegall's quest to his own Book V.

Just as Britomart represents Scudamour as though in spite of herself, so Scudamour represents Britomart as though in spite of himself, in manifest union with Artegall. The Canto's opening scene casts

Scudamour implicitly as another Britomart. He finds himself confronted by Artegall and so 'forth issewed / To have rencountred him in equall race' (3), exactly like Britomart later in the Canto. True, Artegall has second thoughts. As he 'vewed / The armes he bore, his speare he gan abase, / And voide his course', to submit and crave pardon. But this change of mind foreshadows precisely his reaction to the revelation of Britomart's sex. Scudamour may seem to abandon his Britomartial role when he acquiesces. This is divergence within equivalence, though. More emphatically 'to glory' than she, he waives militancy, while nevertheless observing that 'small harme it were / For any knight, upon a ventrous knight / Without displeasance for to prove his spere' (4). Unlike Britomart he wears his heart upon his sleeve; or, to stay with Spenser's fiction, he displays his glory upon his shield, 'on which the winged boy in colours cleare / Depeincted was' (III.xi.7). It is on the strength of its (still variegated, refracted) brightness that Artegall treats him as heaven itself: he checks himself, addressing Scudamour by his meaningful name (IV.vi.3). However, Scudamour mistakes Artegall's falsification for a proper acknowledgement of his orientation 'to glory', a welcome relief from rather than a variant expression of Blandamour's taunts in Canto i. He infers that Artegall must be similarly oriented. Artegall denies this. He will not reveal his name - 'time yet serves that I the same refuse' - and insists on being known as 'the Salvage Knight' (4). To Scudamour, though, this seems the minor qualification that clinches their sameness. Although Artegall 'wonneth in the land of Fayeree', taking himself to be a native (III.iii.26), Scudamour jumps to the conclusion that he sees the forest, silva, Time, merely as an occasional rather than as a fixed abode (IV.vi.5) and aligns himself with him. Thus Scudamour as it were marries Britomart and Artegall in himself, even though he apparently ceases to be the former to become the latter: he marries them into separateness. The fiction at once enacts this explicitly. Whereas in Book III Scudamour implicitly fails to be Artegall to Britomart,⁸⁴ in Book IV he succeeds to the extent of meeting her as Artegall's substitute in opposition. More precisely, he succeeds in that Artegall himself cancels out his defeat in that capacity. Yet the defeat dissociates him from Artegall.

⁸⁴ See p.168.

It belies his contrariness to Britomart. So, for that matter, does his attack. For he counters Britomart qua knight of the 'Hebene speare', an attribute symbolic of orientation 'from glory', which therefore identifies her for him as violater of Amoret, in accordance with Ate's insinuations.⁸⁵ Thus he upholds his orientation 'to glory' - or so he thinks. In fact, of course, acting 'through misconcept' (2), he does the opposite, witness his alignment with Artegall. So in her defeat of him Britomart really champions his cause, as in her contrariness to Artegall. It merely looks as though she does not, by way of complementary metaphor for the mildness with which she repudiates her mirror image. Again, Scudamour joins Artegall in his religious adoration of Britomart qua woman (24) - hardly intelligible in narrative terms, one should think, as a response to the discovery that she is not a rival male. Yet he implicitly reverses Artegall's idolatry: to him the 'celestiall vision' reveals 'that peerelesse paterne of Dame natures pride, / And heavenly image of perfection'. One may compare his tacit destruction of the Island Paradise.⁸⁶ Not that he corrects Artegall. On the contrary, he exults in what looks like a patent manifestation of their sameness and corroborates it, apparently, by his onomastic requital: 'Certes Sir Artegall, / I joy to see you lout so low on ground' (28 and 3-4). In fact 'Artegall' means definitely 'from glory', as 'Salvage Knight', admittedly a pseudonym, does not. Britomart's excitement when she hears Scudamour address him by name (29) should not deceive us into thinking that Scudamour literally identifies him for her. After all, on sequential reading she has already identified him herself (26). Rather, the illusion symbolizes their identity - in opposition, for feigned anger qualifies her joy. In provoking this response Scudamour proves yet again another Britomart in spite of himself. Their alignment may seem more obvious when he elicits her vow 'by this heavens light' (38) to find his Amoret. However, he is offensively impatient of the need to seek her at all, even though he does not falsely precipitate Britomart into womanhood on account of her victory over Busirane but calls her 'Sir' (34). From his point of view she looks culpably

⁸⁵ Compare p.155, 116.

⁸⁶ pp.128-29.

negligent. In his emphatic orientation 'to glory' Scudamour contrasts, within equivalence, with Britomart as she goes 'fearelesse ... to sleepe' when guarding Amoret (36). Thus he parallels Amoret herself, amplifying her feeble protest at being captured by Lust when she 'of nought affeard, / Walkt through the wood, for pleasure, or for need' (vii.4) - a thumbnail allegory, this, of love even while still confined to silva already enjoying itself to the full, friendship, not, as some would have it, a delicate intimation that Amoret wants to do a wee-wee.⁸⁷

V Radigund

The illusion of a continuing, progressive Britomart-Artegall story derives from the conjunction of three episodes, the flashback in Book III, the grand encounter in Book IV, and the Radigund Cantos in Book V. The first and second have now been proved non-sequential. So are the second and third, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. Spenser reintroduces Britomart in Book V as awaiting 'the utmost date, assynde / For his returne' from his quest in aid of Irena (vi.3), in accordance with Artegall's promise, on leaving her in Book IV, to be back in three months' time (vi.43). Again it is Book IV that suggests junction.⁸⁸ It seems to make Artegall fall in love at some point during his quest, in noting that he 'all this while was bound / Upon an hard adventure ... which he did long propound' (42). However, in Book V he undertakes this task as soon as Gloriana has chosen him (i.3-4, 13); and nowhere does he temporarily abandon it in order to participate in Satyrane's tournament. Nor are there any signs that he treasures the thought of Britomart. We never once find him fondly recalling his first meeting with her or eagerly anticipating the projected consummation of their love. For instance, the equanimity with which he bears Envy and Detraction, towards the end of the Book, could so easily have been made convincing by a reference to the prospect of soon being united with Britomart. It is not. Even her intervention on his behalf in Book V itself, compelling

⁸⁷ Nelson, 'Spenser ludens', p.93.

⁸⁸ Compare p.172 and n.75.

testimony, one would have thought, to her active persistence in her care for him, elicits no response whatsoever, whether grateful or embarrassed. He allows her to scold and rearm him like a senseless doll (vii.40-41), without either attempting to justify himself or else penitently concurring with her censure. He seems to accept her authority over him as a matter of course rather than because of any previous commitment subject to the strains and stresses of contingent existence. Who shall say whether he even recognizes her? He certainly leaves her, to resume his quest, with utter indifference. Britomart, to be sure, manifests jealous concern - not, however, on account of his curious blankness as to their common past and future, for she does not seek to remedy it. She takes him to task for his unmanly behaviour per se, not for his fall for Radigund's beauty, which, literally incompatible with his solemn vows of love to herself (IV.vi.41), one would assume to be his real crime, of which his behaviour is merely a degrading symptom. Similarly, she does not exact the promise of his return that he so readily offered of his own accord in Book IV. Though pained by their separation, she finds consolation in the 'hope of his successe', 'seeing his honor, which she tendred chiefe, / Consisted much in that adventures priefe' (V.vii.44), not, to judge from the actual text, in any expectation of a speedy reunion, as Book IV would lead one to think. The fact that she feels comforted at all, set against Artegall's drastic change in attitude towards her, makes her present plight unintelligible as a prolongation of that in Book IV. More is meant than meets the eye when Spenser calls his departure 'her new cause of grieve'.

The novelty of Britomart's situation in Book V consists in a reversal orienting her in the same direction as Artegall, 'from glory'. Instead of opposing each other in their very equality, as in Book IV, they coincide, though separate - a meaningful paradox. Artegall's unawareness of Britomart and her failure to assert herself over against him as the object of his commitment alike imply the complete coalescence which, as distinct characters, they belie. In their hidden indistinguishability they stand for Eternity itself immersed in Time, justice. Accordingly they are not as good as married, as in Book IV, but actually married as obscurely as possible - marriage

being one of Spenser's symbols of glory consummate. With studied casualness he calls Artegall Britomart's 'Lord' (vi.18, vii.40, 45) as well as her knight and her love. In its context, depicting Artegall's domination by women, this quite special title, which expresses a husband's authority over his wife on the model of Christ's headship of the Church, looks heavily ironical. But then, so it does in the biblical passage that establishes it. Sarah calls Abraham 'my lord' when dismissing as laughable the notion that, in their old age, he could still be the channel for the fulfilment of God's promise, offspring.⁸⁹ But he is. Thus 'Lord' symbolizes heaven in spite of the evidence, glory 'from glory'. Spenser's appellation warns us subtly against censuring Artegall's inglorious condition. So does his Homeric simile comparing Britomart, as she comes upon Artegall in his shameful travesty, with Penelope receiving back the long lost and hardly recognisable Ulysses (vii.39). Literally this analogy could not be more inept. Artegall, so far from being another Ulysses finally returning to his homeland long after the completion of the Greeks' punitive expedition against Troy, gets caught up on his way out to vindicate Irena. And Britomart, so far from being another Penelope incredulous on finding herself reunited after all with Ulysses, whom she had passively waited for without real hope, having long given him up for dead, actively intervenes to send Artegall, whose identity she never questions, off on his mission again. Even the immediate ground for the simile proves perverse: Ulysses, difficult to recognize because of his 'many scarres and many hoary heares', offers precisely 'that dreadfull manly looke' (40) which Artegall has forfeited and, having just killed Penelope's wooers, could not possibly prompt Britomart's complaint about Artegall, 'where be / Those mighty palmes, the which ye wont t'embrew / In bloud of Kings'. We must take the comparison allegorically. Casual though it is, it instructs us to regard what appears to be an intermediate stage of a progressing narrative as a symbol of Eternity as yet dismissing itself 'from glory', just as Penelope scorns (ἀτιμάζει) her very own Ulysses in rags.⁹⁰ It stands for justice for the Time being

⁸⁹ Genesis 18.12 and, for its exemplary status, I Peter 3.6.

⁹⁰ Odyssey XXIII.116.

unable to do justice to itself. If we apply this to Britomart's censure, it follows that her reorientation of Artegall must be vacuous. Her rescue operation in fact orients him, and so herself, 'from glory'. Set free to resume his quest, he represents virtue militant as against glory consummate. And his quest stands out from the others as gloriously disgraceful: with Gloriana recalling him prematurely (xii.27), it conveys glory thwarted by itself, like its hero.

What ought to make Britomart's orientation 'from glory' incontrovertible, her suppression of womanhood in herself, in Artegall transformed and in Radigund, may well seem indecisive. No-one could deny that Artegall and Radigund variously compromise its glory. Surely, then, Britomart, in variously opposing them, champions glory? Non sequitur. To draw this inference is to relapse into the fallacy that they are persons, with behaviour susceptible of moral assessment. 'Female' relates to 'glory' as vehicle to tenor. This symbolic connection cannot be severed or qualified. Spenser certainly wants us to feel sexually outraged - not, however, to trigger off literal condemnation while tickling our fancy or, more seriously, evoking deep-seated psychological complexities but to bring home the baffling paradoxicality of justice as glory 'already-not yet' with a vengeance. We must abandon the prevailing conception of the episode as an exemplum of the iniquity of female supremacy corrected, as though Spenser were endorsing women's natural and proper, not to say divinely ordained, desire for real men, by presenting Britomart's elimination of Radigund as a rival as her just punishment for Artegall's degeneration into effeminacy. It seems to have escaped our exemplary critics' notice that, on this view, the poet would undermine his own case. Not only does he spoil the rescue's purely edifying impact by allotting it to an interested party. Worse, he has a man emancipated with mindless passivity at the behest of a woman celebrated for the masculinity denounced in Radigund. Similarly, his community of Amazons reforms itself vacuously in their enthusiastic embrace of a male magistracy for the sake of the woman who introduces it and hence must be the ultimate authority: 'All they as a Goddess her adoring, / Her wisdom did admire, and hearkned to her loring', not to that of Artegall (vii.42-43). Even Spenser's blast against the monstrous regiment of women explodes itself.

Actually, Artegall's submissive attitude to Britomart, his future marriage partner, would exemplify the evil far better than the momentary lapse occasioned by Radigund, especially since he accepts his metamorphosis only reluctantly, out of a sense of duty rather than through inclination (v.22, 23, 26). The episode is not literally about the hierarchy of the sexes at all. It exploits the notion allegorically: justice, essentially eternal peace, symbolized in woman as the non-military sex, must as yet vindicate itself, 'das ewig Weibliche', militantly, as man. According to Spenser 'vertuous women wisely understand, / That they were borne to base humilitie, / Unlesse the heavens them lift to lawfull soveraintie' (25). This observation is by no means a piece of crude anti-feminism hurriedly qualified by an expedient concession to his dedicatee. It signifies justice, glory readily accepting degradation as virtue while it awaits Eternity. We need to appreciate the rationale of male domination. It is not as though in subjection woman avoids the shame of any improper aspirations beyond her sex: she acknowledges with a good grace even as she cannot but enact Man's deprivation of God's glory, properly concentrated in the female rather than the male. The mastery of woman is an abomination because it exposes Man's shame, the Fall, whereas the mastery of man, not as such a vessel of glory, tends to cover it. Female subjection is apparent punishment as secret mercy - not to women but to Man.

Let us consider Radigund, beginning with her name. According to Aptekar 'the whole Radigund episode is illuminated by the fact that one of Radigund's namesakes, Saint Radigund, was remarkable for her insistence on remaining a virgin after her marriage: from an anti-Catholic viewpoint, a notable example of wifely disobedience'.⁹¹ Really? Even rabid protestants cannot have been unaware that catholics cherish wifely obedience. True, virginity is to them a supreme value. But this leads them to exalt celibacy rather than to cultivate unconsummated marriages. Spenser's supposed polemic would be as pointless as its target is untypical. Worse, it would be

⁹¹ Icons of Justice: Iconography & Thematic Imagery in Book V of 'The Faerie Queene' (New York and London, 1969), p.97.

grossly misdirected. St Radigund's behaviour, so far from exemplifying female 'maistrye' in the cause of a pseudo-ideal, finds its explanation in her forced marriage to Clotair I, who had conquered her country and put her brother to death.⁹² To refuse coition in such circumstances is to refuse to make a mockery of holy matrimony, an altogether laudable decision from any point of view. Anyway, Spenser's indictment fails to suggest its object. His Radigund, unmarried, lustful (v.26) and committed to the subjugation of men on principle, qualifies not even as a caricature of her canonized counterpart. Aptekar's analogy illuminates with darkness visible. However, The Faerie Queene consists not of variously plain or far-fetched analogies but of dark conceits. In calling his Amazon Radigund Spenser models her symbolically on a historical virgin wife, to represent Eternity as manifestly at odds with itself. Thus she contrasts within equivalence with Britomart as Eternity in hidden agreement with itself. We see this polarisation in Radigund's Amazonian flaunting of her sex as against Britomart's easy adjustment to masculinity; and in Radigund's disastrous reign as queen as against Britomart's beneficent rule 'as Princess' (vii.42 - as 'Arthegall' she parallels Prince Arthur). The poet's choice of name makes Radigund also, symbolically, a Frankish queen. She is frankly, openly, what Britomart is in virtue of her disguise as 'Angela, the Saxon Queene' (III.iii.58), ruler of a race of invaders. Significantly, the Franks of Radigund's time were already manifestly settled. To judge from Gregory of Tours, though, they were usually embroiled in internecine strife. Their illustrious age of Charlemagne was still to come. By contrast, Angela's Saxons were imperceptibly but single-mindedly settling. According to Sir Terpin Radigund behaves as she does

for the sake of Bellodant the bold,
To whom she bore most fervent love of late,
And wooed him by all the waies she could:
But when she saw at last, that he ne would
For ought or nought be wonne unto her will,
She turn'd her love to hatred manifold. (V.iv.30)

⁹² Hankins, Source and Meaning, p.153, n.2.

Literally this explains nothing. Perhaps the phenomenon of frustrated love developing into a compulsion to unman the sex is intelligible to psycho-analysts. But Spenser's conspicuous failure to hazard any psychological rationalisation at all hardly suggests profound insights unverballed only for want of our modern science of the mind. His characters are personifications. Radigund loves Bellodant by definition. As an Amazon, woman yet warrior, she equals Bellodant, both 'hating war' and 'giving war', the paradox of justice in Time as militant peace. She also hates him by definition. For all their equality he will not be transformed into womanhood 'at last', that is, even though heralding the end of Time. Radigund does not change from love to hate. Her 'hatred manifold' is her love 'turn'd': intolerance of multiplicity and craving for eternal peace are two sides of the same coin. Naturally this hatred expresses itself in defiance of 'all the brave Knights, that hold of Maidenhead' (29), who, after all, unfold as men the woman Gloriana.

The introductory description of Radigund in Canto v (1-4) identifies another counterpart, as Aptekar correctly notes only to misapprehend her analogy yet again. 'Radigund resembles the disguised Venus, and, even more, the hunt- and love-ready Dido who, coming out, splendidly dressed, at dawn, attended by a great throng, was soon to try to deflect Aeneas from the course of his duty.'⁹³ The suggestion that Radigund deflects Artegall from the course of his duty is specious. Spenser certainly places Artegall's submission in an unfavourable light. Yet he never even hints that the knight himself does, or else ought to, remember his commitments to Britomart and Irena. They are literally inoperative, so that the fiction must be non-sequential. Radigund deflects Artegall not from any course of action but from masculinity. Her obstructive passion concerns Artegall in female trappings. Thus she contrasts with Dido who, maintaining a precarious foothold in hostile country, is moved by the heroism of Aeneas and yields to her passion for him when her sister Anna suggests the military glory the Trojan hero and his band would bring to the colony of Tyrian exiles: 'Teucrium comitantibus armis, / Punica se quantis attollet gloria rebus'.⁹⁴ The point at which

⁹³ Icons, p.187; Aeneid IV.136-42.

⁹⁴ Aeneid IV.48-49.

Spenser aligns Radigund with Dido heightens the sense of their dissimilarity. Radigund comes out not to engage in a friendly hunt with a stranded voyager, as yet dependent on her protection, of whom she is already enamoured but to decide in single combat the fate of Sir Terpin's formidable avenger, who has already inflicted great ruin on her state and for whom at this juncture she cannot be supposed to feel anything but hatred. Once again the parallelism subverts itself literally. To appreciate it as a conceit we should take our cue from what it actually conveys, namely Radigund as Dido qua Venus or, to be more specific, qua Venus in the guise of a votaress of Diana.⁹⁵ The end term, Venus, is far more prominent than the middle term, Dido - an impression reinforced by Radigund's unmistakable similarity to Belpheobe (II.iii.26-27), herself modelled primarily on Virgil's Venus.⁹⁶ Hence Radigund is first and foremost a symbol of heavenly glory. As we shall see, her identification as Dido actually confirms this even while alluding to the necessity for her to represent her realm militantly, as in her battle with Artegall.

In the event Dido does not instate Aeneas as her champion. She wants to make love, not war. Yet it would be a very insensitive reader of the Aeneid indeed who can remain content to sum her up as a temptress seducing him from his proper course. True, Renaissance readers perceived the characters of classical epic as images of virtue and vice. But this does not imply any reduction to semi-abstractions, whose 'ideal' morality, instead of being enacted within a nexus of personal relationships, to a certain extent absolves them from it. Virgil goes out of his way to present Dido's frenzy and self-immolation so as to arouse pity and terror in genuinely tragic fashion. No-one

⁹⁵ With Aeneid IV.136-42 compare I.314-20(Venus) and 496-501(Dido).

⁹⁶ II.iii.31, in translating part of the last passage referred to in the previous note, makes Belpheobe another Dido as well, presumably not only so that she may 'shadow' Queen Elizabeth through Dido's alternative name 'Elissa' (IV.335, 610) but also to align her even more closely with Radigund. The stanza goes on to compare her with 'that famous Queene / Of Amazons, whom Pyrrhus did destroy', that is, Penthesilea. Now Radigund, too, is another Penthesilea, being killed by Britomart as 'Arthegall'/Achilles: according to the ancients, as against Dares and the romance tradition, Penthesilea was slain by Achilles rather than by Pyrrhus (see Jortin and Upton in Variorum II, 218-19).

could possibly feel the kind of righteous satisfaction prompted by the collapse of supra-personal embodiments of evil as found in romance or fairy tale. Moreover, the Latin poet carefully refrains from describing the condition of Aeneas, as though to forestall our measuring his 'degradation' and censuring Dido's influence accordingly. Who shall say whether he is another Rinaldo basking voluptuously in Armida's embraces or rather another homesick Ulysses wistfully longing to be released from the no longer pleasing Calypso?⁹⁷ We learn only that he readily falls for her and as readily abandons her at the summons of Jove's messenger. To be sure, rumour has it that 'nunc hiemem inter se luxu, quam longa, fovere / regnorum immemores turpique cupidine captos'. But then, rumour 'pariter facta atque infecta canebat': Virgil will not commit himself. Dido is definitely a person and more certainly spell-bound than spell-binding. Hence it would be arbitrary to insist on Aeneas's duty to Italy without even considering whether he might not have incurred a duty to Dido. In fact, the notion of being in duty bound to live up to your fatum, the ruling principle in Virgil's universe, barely makes sense. Now Aeneas's self-defence - 'nec coniugis umquam / praetendi taedas' - does not stand up at all well, morally, against Dido's withering accusation that he has abused her hospitality and affection: 'perfide, perfide'.⁹⁸ Convinced that their union could only be temporary, he ought not to have consented to it at all. 'I told you so' is a rotten excuse. However, the mere thought of Aeneas the villain is so patently damaging to his epic stature and hence so prejudicial to Virgil's sanity as to discredit the narrowly moral approach a priori. It is not as though Aeneas swerves from his duty, or even from his fate (how could he?). On the contrary, he already tastes the consummation of his destiny. It is not some cruelly irrelevant quirk of fortune but purposive fate which brings Aeneas and Dido together, the selfsame fate which cannot but part them, falling over itself to fulfil what cannot yet be fulfilled, the promise of New Troy. Already Juno and Venus, still implacable enemies, are apparently acting in collusion over Carthage ('quin potius pacem

⁹⁷ Gerusalemme Liberata XVI.17-27; Odyssey V.151-58.

⁹⁸ Aeneid IV.193-94, 190, 338-39, 305, 366.

aeternam pactosque hymenaeos / exercemus?' - 'perge, sequar'), as one day, according to Jupiter's prophecy, they will both wholeheartedly favour the Roman 'imperium sine fine' in which 'claudentur Belli portae'. Already Aeneas finds himself within the rising walls of a city which, centred as it is around a temple where the glory and pathos of Troy in its downfall are most feelingly depicted ('sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi, / sunt lacrimae rerum'), emanates the very spirit of New Troy. Here he is welcomed with striking prevenient grace, hardly matched in Italy itself, into a situation lacking manifest divine deterrents: Iarbas is only a very minor Turnus. Here he is given ample opportunity to expatiate fondly on the Trojans' hardships, 'renovare dolorem', yes, but surely in the sense so poignantly anticipated once in dire distress, 'forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit', as though from the vantage point of a destiny already secured.⁹⁹ It is this understanding of Virgil that informs Spenser's conceit. Radigund relates to Gloriana as Dido and Carthage do to Lavinia and Rome. She symbolizes glory only too obviously, confounding itself.

The marked contextual difference between the Venerean appearances of Dido and Radigund precludes any literal analogy. Spenser evokes Virgil's context for thematic purposes. The hunting scene leads up to Dido's consummation of her love unsealed by marriage. This condition amounts to a contradiction in terms, for marriage means legalized cohabitation, not merely the formal sanction per se. As such it could well symbolize Eternity at odds with itself, like the condition of virgin wife which Radigund has in virtue of her name. Spenser implicitly demands its transfer from Dido to Radigund. He makes Artegall's clash with and submission to Radigund a replica of his grand encounter with Britomart in Book IV. His behaviour in the two episodes is the same, both in its outward course and in its aim to prove a match for would-be infolders of the Order of Maidenhead. Now Britomart 'yeelded her consent / To be his love, and take him for her Lord, / Till they with marriage meet might finish that accord' (IV.vi.41). The conjunction 'till' conveys primarily that they are not yet married. However, it entails logically that they live together as

⁹⁹ Aeneid IV.99-100, 114, I.279, 294, 461-62, II.3, I.203.

though they were, like Aeneas and Dido. Given the compelling parallelism of the two episodes, one must infer that the same applies to Artegall and Radigund. Spenser clinches the inference by comparing Artegall, towards the close of the scene, with Hercules as 'for Iolas sake' he not only 'did apply / His mightie hands, the distaffe vile to hold' but also 'forgetting warres ... onely joyed / In combats of sweet love, and with his mistresse toyed' (V.v.24). Of course, this comparison is literally false at a point where we are about to get an account of Radigund's unsuccessful wooing. You might want to dismiss it as mindless nonsense. (Even Homer nods sometimes, so a lesser Homer must be allowed to suffer from constitutional drowsiness.) This would be rash, though. Since the Legend of Justice links Artegall with Hercules at the very outset (i.2-3), the comparison might be more than local decoration. Also, the special connection between Artegall and Arthur, expressed in their names, would seem to be pointedly underlined by a common association not only with Aeneas but with Hercules too.¹⁰⁰ We had better accept the comparison as an apt conceit - and embrace the corollary, the internal discontinuity of the Radigund episode and hence of the Artegall story as a whole.

But surely Radigund's lack of success in love makes sense only if we read sequentially, attributing to Artegall a prior commitment to Britomart? For it can hardly be due to disenchantment with Radigund. If her charms are powerful enough to turn him into a willing victim of her loathsome practices in the very heat of his vengeance, they must be impressive indeed. In fact, when Clarinda urges him to woo her mistress, he responds so enthusiastically (v.40-41) that we can only conclude that Britomart does not count for anything as a restraining influence. Nor does he merely fake love in order to obtain his release. Clarinda initially approaches him as though she would be a compassionate accomplice in such treachery, only to elicit solemn protestations of his readiness to continue in captivity forever (36-38). Are we to say that these cannot be genuine because he is nevertheless manifestly roused by the hope of liberty? More probably he envisages not escape but freedom as Radigund's lover, exactly like

¹⁰⁰ Compare p.42.

Radigund herself (32-33). After all, if Clarinda's suggestion were that Radigund, once blinded by love, would naturally create opportunities for him to give her the slip, it would not only be false as a matter of fact but even more transparently illogical than Radigund's expectation that a loosening of his bonds will prompt sexual passion. Can we possibly have to consider Artegall stupid as well as insincere? Can we possibly give credence to a Clarinda of such self-defeating clumsiness in double perfidy? We must treat the fiction as allegory. Radigund is not a bisexual woman lusting after a male transvestite. She personifies Eternity in Time recognizing itself in Time as Eternity, personified in Artegall, who, even as Bello-dant, proves himself to be Bell-odant, throwing away his sword (13), and who, as man, precipitates himself as woman. As always in Spenser, love symbolizes equivalence. Hence it is mutual. Artegall credits Radigund with abundant favour (42). The heavy irony of this does not cancel out the straightforward meaning. She as it were reveals him to himself, glorifying him 'from glory' into her likeness. He would court her as a matter of duty (41) - a literal absurdity conveying a conceptual imperative. Now this love frustrates itself: it repolarizes Radigund and Artegall sexually, thus destroying its ground. He rightly pleads that 'want of meanes hath bene mine onely let' (42), as Spenser brings home in the ensuing scene. Clarinda, intermediary or 'means' between Radigund and Artegall, embodies the impossibility of mediation precisely through her equivalence, in her own love for Artegall, both to her mistress and to him. One senses Radigund's misgivings when enlisting her services: 'Now is the time, that I untimely must / Thereof make tryall' (29). Considering this, and the fact that nothing makes it literally necessary for Radigund to woo Artegall by proxy, the scene can only be an allegory. It highlights justice as Eternity thwarted. Let us not deprive it of its point by insisting that Artegall must be pretending all along. True, we have Spenser's word for it that 'yet never meant he in his noble mind, / To his owne absent love to be untrew' (56, and compare vi.2). This does not mean, though, that he really cherishes Britomart, not Radigund. It means that his committed and confident captivity in incommunicable aspiration to Radigund is, only too manifestly, his love for Britomart as she effaces herself, by way of complementary

metaphor. That explains why to Britomart the very spectacle that confirms her worst suspicions also allays them: she

then too well beleev'd, that which tofore
Jealous suspect as true untruely drad,
Which vaine conceipt now nourishing no more,
She sought with ruth to salve his sad misfortunes sore. (vii.38)

Spenser's narrative would suggest that Britomart offers Artegall something rather more substantial than the pity of this quotation's last line. But the narrative is illusory. Britomart effects merely a shift in emphasis. In suppressing womanhood she covers glory's shame.

The preceding pages more than imply that Britomart's two meetings with Artegall, in Books IV and V, cannot be successive events. Let us finally dispose of the most obvious objection to this contention: Spenser suggests an interval of three months (IV.vi.43). It is a little strange that Artegall knows in advance the duration of his quest and that Britomart does not start worrying until after this time (V.vi.3). It is most odd that she should be uncertain about her time reckoning, unbelievable that she should feign such uncertainty, preposterous that she should substitute days for hours and months for weeks (5). And it is strictly impossible that her desperate anxiety should at once be caused by the arrival of Talus with his bad news 'in untimely houre, ere it was sought' (3) yet also long precede this arrival 'at last' (6-8). Britomart's confusion in her very certainty concerns not a particular period of time but Time, temporality, which in justice expires 'already' in principle but manifestly 'not yet'. Significantly, she suffers this perplexity as a woman, thus paralleling the condition of Artegall. However, covering it as a man, she 'streight her selfe did dight, and armor don' (17) - literally in rather extravagant haste, one should think, with Radigund so far to seek and with no less a scourge of villainy than Talus to safe-conduct her.

EPILOGUE

The temptation is great to write a peroration ringing with triumphant QEDs. I shall resist it; not to retract or even just qualify my thesis at the last minute, but to end with a properly Spenserian anticlimax. The preceding argument, in putting The Faerie Queene on the map, may lead readers to expect that, on returning to the poem, they will find it readily falling into place. Such optimism must be forestalled. Exposed anew to its sheer copiousness, they are likely to be overwhelmed and to conclude, regretfully, that the argument is as inadequate as it is selective. After all, vast stretches have been left out of consideration. And the episodes actually discussed will inevitably seem to belie their conceptual interpretations again when confronted in all their density and opulence. The poem demands great faith. But perhaps it would be unrealistic to think that readers will feel prompted to return to the poem in the first place. While assenting to the thesis intellectually, they might decline to put their belief to the test, deciding that they have no time for a huge cryptogram, whose every rift is loaded with ore of 'conceitful thought'. The poem demands great patience. Long by any standard, it aggravates its length in that it is too arresting to be 'read' in the usual sense of the word. My thesis does not seem calculated to win an audience for it. Indeed, it may well alienate a good many of its former champions, whose free-ranging exploits it checks with a forbidding claim to exclusive truth. Worse, in presenting Spenser's fiction as utterly determined by his doctrine, itself certainly no longer common ground and possibly unpalatable, I have allowed no scope for enjoying the poem purely 'as literature' and thus, to many, justified its removal from the canon. The Faerie Queene is a σκάνδαλον, like the Cross of Christ. Only if it crucifies us shall we behold its glory.

APPENDIX

A

Letter of the Authors expounding his
whole intention in the course of this worke: which
for that it giveth great light to the Reader, for
the better understanding is hereunto
annexed.

To the Right noble, and Valorous, Sir Walter Raleigh knight,
Lo. Wardein of the Stanneryes, and her Majesties liefe-
tenaunt of the County of Cornewayll.

Sir knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and
this booke of mine, which I have entituled the Faery Queene,
being a continued Allegory, or darke conceit, I have thought good
aswell for avoyding of gealous opinions and misconstructions, as
5 also for your better light in reading therof, (being so by you
commanded,) to discover unto you the general intention and
meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned,
without expressing of any particular purposes or by-accidents
therein occasioned. The generall end therefore of all the
10 booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and
gentle discipline: Which for that I conceived shoulde be most
plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall
fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather
for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample: I
15 chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the
excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former
workes, and also furthest from the daunger of envy, and
suspition of present time. In which I have followed all the
antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of
20 Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governour and a
vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis:

then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of
Aeneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando:
and lately Tasso dissevered them againe, and formed both parts
25 in two persons, namely that part which they in Philosophy call
Ethice, or vertues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo:
The other named Politice in his Godfredo. By ensample of which
excellente Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he
was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve
30 private morall vertues, as Aristotile hath devised, the which is
the purpose of these first twelve bookes: which if I finde to be
well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged, to frame the other
part of polliticke vertues in his person, after that hee came to
be king. To some I know this Methode will seeme displeasaunt,
35 which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way
of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, then thus
clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall devises. But such, me seeme,
should be satisfide with the use of these dayes, seeing all
things accounted by their shoves, and nothing esteemed of, that
40 is not delightfull and pleasing to commune sence. For this
cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one in the
exquisite depth of his judgement, formed a Commune welth such as
it should be, but the other in the person of Cyrus and the Persians
fashioned a governement such as might best be: So much more
45 profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule.
So have I laboured to doe in the person of Arthure: whome I
conceive after his long education by Timon, to whom he was by
Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soone as he was borne of
the Lady Igrayne, to have seene in a dream or vision the Faery
50 Queen, with whose excellent beauty ravished, he awaking resolved
to seeke her out, and so being by Merlin armed, and by Timon
thoroughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faerye land.
In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but
in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious
55 person of our soveraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery
land. And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her.
For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall
Queene or Emprise, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull

Lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belpheobe,
60 fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceipt of
Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana.) So in
the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in
particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotile and the
rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it
65 them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deedes of
Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke.
But of the xii. other vertues, I make xii. other knights the
patrones, for the more variety of the history: Of which these
three bookes contayn three, The first of the knight of the
70 Redcrosse, in whome I expresse Holynes: The seconde of Sir Guyon,
in whome I sette forth Temperaunce: The third of Britomartis a
Lady knight, in whome I picture Chastity. But because the
beginning of the whole worke seemeth abrupte and as depending
upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of
75 these three knights severall adventures. For the Methode of a
Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an
Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne,
accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth
into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and there
80 recouring to the thinges forepaste, and divining of thinges to
come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all. The beginning therefore
of my history, if it were to be told by an Historiographer, should
be the twelfth booke, which is the last, where I devise that the
Faery Queene kept her Annuall feaste xii. dayes, upon which xii.
85 severall dayes, the occasions of the xii. severall adventures
hapned, which being undertaken by xii. severall knights, are in
these xii. books severally handled and discoursed. The first was
this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented him selfe
a tall clownishe younge man, who falling before the Queen of
90 Faries desired a boone (as the manner then was) which during that
feast she might not refuse: which was that hee might have the
atchievement of any adventure, which during that feaste should
happen, that being graunted, he rested him on the floore, unfitte
through his rusticity for a better place. Soone after entred a
95 faire Ladye in mourning weedes, riding on a white Asse, with a

dwarfe behind her leading a warlike steed, that bore the Armes of a knight, and his speare in the dwarfes hand. Shee falling before the Queene of Faeries, complayned that her father and mother an ancient King and Queene, had bene by an huge dragon many years shut up in a brasen Castle, who thence suffred them not to yssew: and therefore besought the Faery Queene to assygne her some one of her knights to take on him that exployt. Presently that clownish person upstarting, desired that adventure: whereat the Queene much wondering, and the Lady much gainesaying, yet he 105 earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the Lady told him that unlesse that armour which she brought, would serve him (that is the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise, which being forthwith put upon him with dewe furnitures thereunto, he seemed 110 the goodliest man in al that company, and was well liked of the Lady. And eftesoones taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that straunge Courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginneth the first booke, vz.

A gentle knight was pricking on the playne. &c.

115 The second day ther came in a Palmer bearing an Infant with bloody hands, whose Parents he complained to have bene slayn by an Enchaunteresse called Acrasia: and therfore craved of the Faery Queene, to appoint him some knight, to performe that adventure, which being assigned to Sir Guyon, he presently went 120 forth with that same Palmer: which is the beginning of the second booke and the whole subject thereof. The third day there came in, a Groome who complained before the Faery Queene, that a vile Enchaunter called Busirane had in hand a most faire Lady called Amoretta, whom he kept in most grievous torment, 125 because she would not yield him the pleasure of her body. Whereupon Sir Scudamour the lover of that Lady presently tooke on him that adventure. But being unable to performe it by reason of the hard Enchauntments, after long sorrow, in the end met with Britomartis, who succoured him, and reskewed his love. 130 But by occasion hereof, many other adventures are intermedled, but rather as Accidents, then intendments. As the

love of Britomart, the overthrow of Marinell, the misery of Florimell, the vertuousnes of Belpheobe, the lasciviousnes of Hellenora, and many the like.

135 Thus much Sir, I have briefly overronne to direct your understanding to the wel-head of the History, that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handfull gripe al the discourse, which otherwise may happily seeme tedious and confused. So humbly craving the
140 continuance of your honorable favour towards me, and th'eternall establishment of your happines, I humbly take leave.

23. January. 1589

Yours most humbly affectionate.

Ed. Spenser.

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